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Affirmation on wheels

Penn State grad founded an unusual gay pride march in communist Vietnam

By Jim Lewis

Tam Nguyen, a graduate student at Penn State Harrisburg, was one of the founders of VietPride, Vietnam's first gay pride march.

Photo by Jim Lewis.
Pride march photo submitted by Tam Nguyen.

When Tam Nguyen, a gay woman, staged the first gay pride march in Vietnam in 2012, she faced a challenge: There is no right to assemble, even peacefully, in the communist country, so how could participants march without risking arrest?

The solution: *Wheels.*

Instead of marching through the streets of Hanoi, participants rode bicycles. The goal was to make the procession look less like recent political anti-China protests in Vietnam's capital that ended with the government arresting participants.

And just for good measure, Nguyen and the gay rights activists who helped her courted foreign embassies in their human rights work – and invited foreign diplomats to ride in the procession with them. Nurturing international support was "a very different strategy and tactic," Nguyen admits, but effective. Diplomats from the U.S., Canada and Sweden were in the procession. "Of course, you don't want to arrest a foreign diplomat – it would be very, very messy," she said.

The very first Vietnamese gay pride march, VietPride, went off without incident. The government seemed unperturbed by it, or two subsequent marches in 2013 and 2014. Nguyen suspects that the communist government feared its attempt to stop the march would call attention to its arrest of political protestors – and its human rights record. "As long as you don't push the boundaries too

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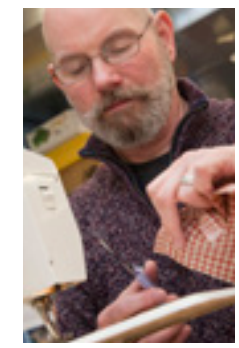
Proud History:
Paul Foltz's Costume Designs on Exhibit

By Barry Loveland



"Welcome to chaos," Paul Foltz greets me with a wry smile. Making my way through the headquarters of Theatre Harrisburg in a maze of performance and rehearsal spaces, piles of show props and racks of costumes, I know that I have entered Paul's world. And what a world it is. His studio is a riot of colors, patterns and things covering every wall and every surface. You get a sense from him that while his world is at times stressful and chaotic, that he is having a lot of fun doing what he loves.

Paul is about to enter his 35th year as costume designer for Theatre Harrisburg. To commemorate that occasion and LGBT History Month, the LGBT Center of Central PA History Project and Historic Harrisburg, Inc. are collaborating on a special new exhibit that will open October 16 and run until November 17, called ART/history: a retrospective exhibit on the career of costume designer Paul Foltz.

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Paul Foltz with two of his historical creations.

Photos by John Powl, Under the Bridge Productions

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All Aboard to First-Time Pride pg 9

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Political Update

• LGBT activists march in May Day Parade

Despite a Russian federal anti-gay law, LGBT rights activists and allies were allowed to march in a May Day parade May 1, celebrating International Workers' Day. Over 90,000 people attended, around 600 representing the LGBT community. The activists carried placards with slogans such as "No to discrimination", and "dump homophobia".

• Korean police reject Pride parade

The Korean Observer reported that South Korea's Pride Parade has been rejected by the Namdaemun Police Station and Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency due to pressure from conservative groups, according to the Korea Queer Cultural Festival's (KQCF) organising committee. The Pride Parade originated in Seoul in 2000 with only 50 people attending. Last year around 20,000 people attended. However, for the first time in Korean history non-affirming church groups blocked the Pride parade in 2014 causing major traffic jams and tension between the Christian groups, the LGBT members and the community.

• Kazahkstan rejects homophobic bill

Human Rights First reports that Kazahkstan's Constitutional Council has rejected the proposed homophobic discriminatory propaganda bill as unconstitutional, a step that blocks the measure from becoming law. The rejection ensures that 2022 Olympic contender Kazakhstan meets requirements included in the Olympic Charter with regard to non-discrimination based on sexual orientation. "This ruling is an important moment in the fight for the protection of human rights in Kazakhstan," said *Human Rights First's* Shawn Gaylord.

• US LGBT envoy to visit Uganda

The U.S. State Department's newly-appointed special envoy for LGBT rights, Randy Berry, is planning a visit to Uganda in July, the State Department said. The department did not provide details of the trip or what Berry hoped to accomplish in a visit to the country at the center of one of the longest running international confrontations over LGBT rights. Ugandan and American LGBT activists have previously criticized the U.S. response to the passage of a sweeping anti-LGBT law in 2014 for being slow and sending missed messages, but the law was struck down in August of that year. Attempts to restore the law have so far failed to gain traction in the face of apparent opposition from President Yoweri Museveni.

• Lithuanian Parliament: "No barrier"

A committee of Lithuanian lawmakers has announced they could find no constitutional barriers to the introduction of same-sex civil partnerships in the Baltic state. A bill to legalize same-sex civil unions in Lithuania has cleared a parliamentary committee that was tasked to determine whether such a law would breach the country's constitution. Lithuania has defined marriage as only being between two people of the two sexes so the inquiry was an important hurdle in progressing the bill. "The majority of committee members agreed that the bill would not run counter to the Constitution," committee deputy chair Stasys Sedbaras said, according to *The Lithuania Tribune.*

• Out candidates win UK Parliament seats

Parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom in May produced a record number of openly gay, lesbian and bisexual MPs - records both for the UK and the world, according to Dr. Andrew Reynolds, an associate professor of political science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. By his count, "27 out LGBT candidates have been elected to the UK House of Commons after 154 candidates ran on May 7," Reynolds told Gay Politics. This includes four who were transgender candidates.

• Japan: East Asia welcomes marriage

Over Tokyo's Rainbow Pride Weekend last April, Ren married her partner of four years, Yae, on stage before hundreds of Japanese strangers. They were proud to tie the knot and be part of a milestone in Japan and East Asia, a region where same-sex partnerships have never previously been recognized. While same-sex marriage has become increasingly common in the U.S. and Western Europe, it's still rare in other parts of the world. There are signs of change in some parts of Asia. New Zealand legalized same-sex marriage in 2013 and Australia recognizes civil unions. Vietnam this year repealed a law banning same-sex marriages, though it does not officially recognize them. No place in East Asia recognized same-sex marriages until last March, when Tokyo's trendy Shibuya ward passed a local ordinance granting same-sex couples the right to partnership certificates.

• Ireland: vote for same-sex marriage

Ireland has voted resoundingly to legalize gay marriage in the world's first national vote on the issue. "We're the first country in the world to enshrine marriage equality in our constitution and do so by popular mandate. That makes us a beacon, a light to the rest of the world of liberty and equality. So it's a very proud day to be Irish," said Leo Varadkar, a Cabinet minister who came out as gay at the start of a government-led effort to amend Ireland's conservative Catholic constitution. The latest poll before the election May 22 showed 78% of voters in favor of passing the constitutional amendment, a staggering number, considering that Irish voters only approved divorce in 1995, and with a margin of less than 1%.

• Luxembourg's PM and partner marry

Luxembourg's Prime Minister Xavier Bettel, right, puts his arm around his partner Gauthier Destenay as they leave the town hall after their recent marriage in Luxembourg. Luxembourg's Prime Minister Xavier Bettel married his partner Gauthier Destenay on Friday, becoming the first European Union leader to enter a gay marriage. Bettel becomes the second world leader to do so. Iceland's Prime Minister Johanna Sigurdardottir married her partner five years ago. The interesting part about this development is that gay marriage is a relatively new thing in Luxembourg. Bettel's party won a prominent spot in the ruling coalition after campaigning for same-sex marriage.

• Gambian president condemned

Following calls from LGBT advocates urging her to speak out, U.S. National Security Adviser Susan Rice has condemned the president of Gambia's pledge to slit the throats of gay men in his country as "unconscionable."

"We condemn his comments, and note these threats come amid an alarming deterioration of the broader human rights situation in The Gambia," Rice said in a statement. "We are deeply concerned about credible reports of torture, suspicious disappearances – including of two American citizens - and arbitrary detention at the government's hands," Rice said.

• Data faked about changing voters' minds

A study published last December in *Science* claiming that gay people advocating same-sex marriage can change voters' minds has been retracted due to fraud. The study reported it found that a 20-minute, one-on-one conversation with a gay political canvasser could steer California voters in favor of same-sex marriage. Not only that, but these changed opinions lasted for months and influenced other people in the voter's household, the study claimed. Donald Green, senior author on the study, has retracted it after learning that his co-author, UCLA graduate student Michael LaCour, had faked the survey results.

• Ban on gay leaders "cannot be sustained"

The president of the Boy Scouts, former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, has told the organization its current blanket ban on gay leaders "cannot be sustained," calling on the group to revise the rule "sooner rather than later" reports BuzzFeed's Chris Geidner. In 2013, it ended its ban on gay youth members but maintained its ban on gay adult leaders. "I must speak as plainly and bluntly to you as I spoke to presidents when I was director of the CIA and secretary of defense," he said. "We must deal with the world as it is, not as we might wish it to be. The status quo in our movement's membership standards cannot be sustained."

• Ready for the last party?

End Times broadcaster Rick Wiles was not optimistic on his "Trunews" program about what will happen if the Supreme Court strikes down bans on same-sex marriage. Unsurprisingly, neither was optimistic. "Now the communists rule this nation," Wiles said, "and everywhere communism takes control, they go after the churches and they kill the pastors and they demolish the church buildings and they reeducate the church children. That's what's coming to America. It's already started." He warned "We are at the end of the road as a nation," he warned. "If the Supreme Court dares to defy Almighty God one more time, I'm telling you it will be the last time."

• Lesbian couple fired for 'living a life of sin'

Kelly Bardier and Jaci Pfeiffer were fired last month after their employers became aware of their relationship. The couple both worked at Aloma Methodist Early Childhood Learning Center in Winter Park Florida as daycare workers, Kelly for 8 months and Jaci for almost 2 years. School Director Barbara Twatchman confronted the couple after hearing rumors of their relationship. When the women confessed that they were dating, Twatchman gave them an ultimatum: "We were called into the director's office and told that if we chose to continue living a life of sin, we would be terminat-

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PRIDE FESTIVAL OF CENTRAL PA

Be Proud - We're Good for the Stock Market

Frank Pizzoli

The kingdon ain't come yet for the LGBT community but we have many reasons to be proud.

We are a resilient people who, in spite of being maligned and misunderstood for centuries, move on with our lives in productive ways.

Despite the fact that same-sex marriage in Pennsylvania is allowed because the court decided that the state law was unconstitutional - and not because the General Assembly saw fit to allow taxpaying adults the right to marry the person of their choice - we see loving couples everywhere involved in the routines of everyday life.

Yeah, yeah, opponents honk on about an "activist court," when they know full well that an activist court is simply one that decides something you don't like. They never scream "activist court" when a judicial body denies marriage equality.

Moving right along, did you know that inclusive LGBT corporate policies are good for business? We're good for the stock market. Can't be any more American than that. The business rationale is clear enough: The LGBT community in the United States represents almost $800 billion in buying power. But what about the employer rationale? Does the establishment of policies and practices that attract and embrace LGBT staff bolster corporate performance? Do voluntary outlays for LGBT employees (such as health coverage for married or domestic partners) have an impact on financial performance?

Bankers say yes. And the one thing we know for sure about bankers is that they know numbers (and take bailouts).

Credit Suisse has been exploring the issue of LGBT inclusive policies for three years through their Open Network, the company's network for LGBT employees. They worked with the Williams Institute of UCLA to scan existing academic research on the link between LGBT policy and corporate performance.

The Williams Institute found a number of studies, when taken together, showed a positive correlation between inclusive policies and the health outcomes, job commitment, and job satisfaction of a corporation's employees. These studies also found a correlation, but a less conclusive one, with increased worker creativity and innovation, improved organizational-citizenship behaviors, and improved stock prices. Still, they wanted more quantitative data.

After tons of data has been analyzed, here's the result: The LGBT data is 98.8% correlated to the daily returns of the S&P 500. That means the daily returns of the Index have been slightly higher or slightly lower than the S&P 500, but on average, have not been more than 1.2% different on a daily basis. It is a single data point. And it may not sound like much, at first glance. But it indicates quantitatively that an employer's stance on LGBT issues does not make a material difference in its stock price, even in today's economy. It shows that the costs associated with instituting LGBT practices and policies place no drag on equity performance.

Data like this underscores what I've always said: Eventually, markets love money more than they dislike the LGBT community. A sale made is a dollar in the coffers. That's Adam Smith's essential point about Capitalism. One person offers something in the marketplace he or she thinks someone will buy. In turn, then they take that money and buy what they want. They don't have to marry a person of the same sex if they don't want to but they also cannot object to another person doing so. Both sides simply have to provide good and services to the community at large. It's not complicated unless you want it to be.

Luck of the Irish
VOTING BOOTH
YES 62%
NO 38%
MARRIAGE EQUALITY
MAY 22, 2015 IRELAND BECAME THE FIRST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD TO ENACT MARRIAGE EQUALITY BY POPULAR VOTE. VOTER TURNOUT WAS 61%... AMONG HIGHEST IN IRISH ELECTORAL HISTORY. THE YES VOTE BEAT THE NO VOTE BY A MARGIN OF 400,000 VOTES.

Paid Sick Leave Goal of Pride @ Work

Submitted by Pride @ work

As we know well in the LGBT community, our state legislature doesn't do anything quickly. We've been fighting for years to pass state wide non-discrimination protection for LGBT workers. Now instead of rushing to protect workers, legislators are in a race to take rights away. Right now some are trying to fast track a law that would take away sick days from 200,000 workers and strip the rights of local communities to create their own ordinances.

Lawmakers from communities throughout Pa. want to stop workers in Philadelphia from finally earning paid sick days. At the same time, those same lawmakers want to make sure their own local governments are blocked from passing ordinances that provide sick days in their communities.

Following years of debate, Philadelphia's city council passed a sick leave law in February that was slated to take effect May 13 of this year. It happened only after a task force report found paid sick days would help more than 200,000 workers – about 40% of the city's workforce – without harming businesses. (i) It was a glimmer of hope to many struggling to get by without good health insurance and retirement benefits.

Under the Philadelphia law, workers at businesses with 10 or more employees could earn at least an hour of paid sick time for every 40 hours worked. Workers at smaller businesses could earn unpaid sick days. It's commonsense that people who work hard and are devoted to their jobs should be able to earn paid sick time.

Many of these workers are members of the LGBT community, given that Philadelphia is home to one of largest LGBT populations in the U.S. (ii) A large number of LGBT workers in Philadelphia are forced to go to work ill because they cannot afford to lose pay or risk losing their jobs. Many studies demonstrate that paid sick days help employers by promoting productivity and reducing turnover. San Francisco passed a law similar to Philadelphia's in 2007, and has had overwhelming success. In recognition of the policy's obvious public health benefits, two-thirds of San Francisco employers support the law.(iii)

Philadelphia's paid sick days law strengthens LGBT families by allowing workers to take leave to care for their partners and children. It is estimated that 30% of LGBT adults in Philadelphia have at least one child in the household.(iv) On average, the household income of LGBT couples raising children in Pennsylvania is 33% lower than the household income of heterosexual, married parents.(vii) As a result, LGBT parents in Pennsylvania are less likely to be able to afford to take unpaid time off from work. Providing paid sick days would allow LGBT workers in Philadelphia to better care for their own health needs and those of their family members.

For Philadelphians living with HIV/AIDS, paid sick days are not only a key economic protection, it can be a life or death issue – especially those individuals who work in lower-wage and service sector jobs. Not being able to take time off to attend medical appointments and recover from illness jeopardizes their wellbeing. Moreover, access to paid sick time influences the ability of Philadelphia workers to provide care for aging family members with HIV/AIDS.

Among Philadelphia residents living with HIV/AIDS, more than 70% are 40 years of age or older and more than 36% are 50 years of age or older. (v) As the population ages, their working family members will face increasing eldercare demands.

In addition, paid sick leave is important for transgender workers in Philadelphia. With a modest floor of paid sick leave, transgender workers are able to take care of their health needs without fear of lost pay or job retaliation

Pennsylvania Pride at Work, the AFLCIO LGBT constituency group, calls on our state lawmakers to listen to the diverse voices in Pennsylvania fighting to stop this attack on paid sick leave. Workers, parents, domestic violence survivors, good government groups, churches and many other organizations have fought for years to help workers earn paid sick days.

Legislators in Harrisburg from every community should stand with workers who are trying to be the best caregivers and providers possible – not trying to make our lives harder.

Pride @ Work Pennsylvania is the officially recognized LGBT constituency group of the AFL-CIO.

i Amy Traub, Paid Sick Time: Healthy for Philadelphia Workers and Businesses, Drum Major Institute for Public Policy (Oct. 2010), p. 2.

ii Gary J. Gates, Same-sex Couples and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Population: New Estimates from the American Community Survey, The Williams Institute (Oct. 2006), p. 7.

iii Robert Drago and Vicky Lovell, San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance: Outcomes for Employers and Employees, Institute for Women's Policy Research (Feb. 2011).

iv PHMC, The Philadelphia LGBT Community Assessment, p. 37. Although the relationship to the child could not be determined in this Philadelphia study, census data shows that 20% of same sex couples in Pennsylvania are raising children. See Romero, et. al., Census Snapshot: Pennsylvania, p. 1. Despite the lack of adequate data on LGBT parents in Philadelphia, these statistics indicate that a significant minority of LGBT adults in the city are raising children.

vii Romero, et. al., Census Snapshot: Pennsylvania, p. 3.

v Shpaner, M., Brady, K. & Eberhart, M., AIDS Activities Coordinating Office (AACO) Annual Surveillance Report: 2009, Philadelphia Department of Public Health, AACO (2010), p. 11.

voice box

E-mail your thoughts to posops@aol.com

HUCKABEE ON TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

What's wrong with presidential candidate Mike Huckabee? Can you believe he actually said he wished he could have pretended to be transgender in high school "when it came time to take showers in PE."

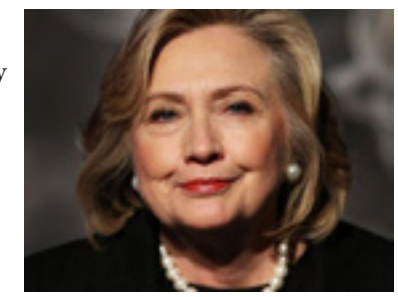
He made the comment at the 2015 National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, in early 2015 but the comment was only uploaded to youtube May 30. "For those who do not think that we are under threat, simply recognize that the fact that we are now in city after city watching ordinances say that your seven-year-old daughter, if she goes into the restroom cannot be offended and you can't be offended if she's greeted there by a 42-year-old man who feels more like a woman than he does a man."

Huckabee continued saying he wished someone told him in high school he "could have felt like a woman" and shower with the girls. "Now I wish that someone told me that when I was in high school that I could have felt like a woman when it came time to take showers in PE," Huckabee said. "I'm pretty sure that I would have found my feminine side and said, 'Coach, I think I'd rather shower with the girls today.' You're laughing because it sounds so ridiculous doesn't it?" No, Mike, you sound ridiculous.

- Rolo, a reader

Clinton and Santorum on LGBT Issues

By Central Voice



Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton said June 1, as Pride events kicked off for the summer, that advances made by the LGBT community should be recognized during Pride celebrations. She also noted that more work remains. In Pennsylvania, for example, although the state's anti-same-sex marriage law was struck down by the court, there are no job protections for workers in the Keysatone State. The same legislature that passed the gay marriage ban has yet to act on House Bill 300 and Senate Bill 300, companion pieces of legislation that would add these protections to the state's Human Relations Act.

Clinton said, "Each June, we honor the contributions of the LGBTQ community and proudly reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that every member of the American family can live, work, and marry the person they love without enduring discrimination or prejudice," Clinton said. "As we celebrate the hard-fought progress that has been made toward advancing the rights of LGBTQ Americans, we must also recognize that this work is far from finished. I hope that each and every one of us will dedicate ourselves to building a future in which every person can live in dignity, free from violence or fear, free to be themselves, free to live up to their God-given potential no matter where they live or who they are — this month and every month."

June 24 President Obama hosted a White House reception commemorating June as Pride Month, a reception held each year of the Obama administration.

Meanwhile, Pennsylvania's own Rick Santorum, a Republican presidential candidate said May 31 he'd "of course" fight a ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court on marriage if the decision overturns state prohibitions on same-sex nuptials. Which mean, of course, that Pennsylvania's law could come back into play. The state's U.S senator made the comments on NBC's "Meet the Press" when moderator Chuck Todd asked the candidate if he'd accept the ruling, or would fight it. "Of course, I'd fight it," Santorum said. "Roe versus Wade was decided 30-some years ago and I continue to fight that because I think the court got it wrong. I think if the court decides this case in error, I will continue to fight as we have on the issue of life. That's the role of the citizenry. We're not bound by what nine people say in perpetuity."

Santorum, who's known for his opposition to same-sex marriage, didn't enumerate the way in which he'd seek to fight the court decision, although in the past he's championed a U.S. constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

Overall, according to a recent report by the Movement Advancement Project, Pennsylvania is one of 13 states ranked with a "low" rating on overall policy on laws, regulations, and policies protecting sexual orientation and gender identity. In all, there are 12 state plus Washington, DC; 10 states with a high policy rating, 10 states with a medium policy rating, and 15 states with a negative policy rating.

ed but if we decided not to be gay anymore, we could keep our jobs," Bardier told me in an email. They had no prior marks against them. The two didn't work together in an official capacity, Barier told me. They drove to work together and every now and then assisted in some of the projects in each other's classroom but that was the extent of their work relationship. "I said, 'Can I get fired for this?' [Barbara Twatchman] said, 'Yes,' and I was surprised," Pfeiffer told the Orlando Sentinel. Firing LGBT employees is legal in 29 states, including Pennsylvania. In 33 states, it's legal for someone to be fired on the basis of their gender identity.

• Vetoes ENDA, sends explicit photo

A North Dakota lawmaker who sent an explicit photo of himself to another man says the exchange being made public is retaliation for a recent vote against expanding gay rights. Rep. Randy Boehning, a 52-year-old Republican legislator from Fargo, says a Capitol employee told him a fellow lawmaker vowed to out him as gay if he continued to vote against bills granting gays legal protections against discrimination. The exchange came to light when Dustin Smith, a 21-year-old Bismarck man with no known connections to the Capitol, contacted *The Forum* earlier this month, saying he recognized Boehning from the gay dating smart phone app Grindr. Chatting under user name Top Man!, Boehning sent Smith sexually suggestive messages and, in the early morning hours of March 12, an unsolicited photo of his penis, according to exchanges reviewed by *The Forum*. "How can you discriminate against the person you're trying to pick up?" Smith said in a recent interview. After first declining comment, Boehning confirmed he was Top Man! and said he doesn't think sending a graphic photo of himself to a stranger is a lapse in judgment, as Grindr is an adult site where users often exchange such images.

• Laramie passes LGBT protections

When Matthew Shepard was beaten, tied to a fence and left for dead nearly 20 years ago, his murder became a rallying cry in the gay rights movement. Other states adopted stricter laws against violence and discrimination, and Congress passed hate crimes legislation bearing Shepard's name. Yet in Wyoming, advocates have tried unsuccessfully for years statewide to pass protections for gays in housing and the workplace. They finally scored a victory on after trying a different approach: a local ordinance in the college town where Shepard was killed. The Laramie city council recently approved a local anti-discrimination ordinance 7-2 in favor of the measure that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in housing, employment and access to public facilities such as restaurants. Judy Shepard, Matt Shepard's mother, said, "I'm thrilled that Laramie's doing it, at the same time sort of saddened that the state of Wyoming can't see fit to do that as well."

• Arkansas's Keeps Antidiscrimination Law

Voters in Eureka Springs affirmed an LGBT-inclusive civil rights ordinance, even though a new state law will make it unenforceable, according to *The Advocate*. Residents of Eureka Springs, Ark., recently voted overwhelmingly to retain the town's LGBT rights ordinance. In the small tourist town, known as the "gay capital of the Ozarks," the vote count was 579 for keeping the ordinance, 231 against, reported the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.*

• Bill aims to wipe out anti-discrimination

The *Huffington Post* reports that the Michigan House of Representatives is considering a bill that would bar local governments from enacting worker protections that are stronger than state or federal laws already on the books. That means no higher minimum wage, no better sick leave policy and no anti-discrimination protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers. The bill, proposed by state Rep. Earl Poleski (R), does not explicitly address LGBT rights. But the potential impact of House Bill 4052 seems clear. There are 22 states with laws banning discrimination against LGBT individuals; Michigan is not one of them. Cities and towns there that want to protect their LGBT workers have had to pass their own laws.

• Fairfax County school's anti-trans ban

Fairfax County Public Schools has approved a proposal that will add gender identity to its non-discrimination policy. The public school system's non-discrimination policy will now include protections for transgender students and employees. The vote followed a stormy meeting in which more than 200 parents and observers cheered and jeered as 10 citizens testified for or against the proposed policy change before the board debated and voted on the issue.
At least three parents expressing opposition to the policy change said it would violate the privacy rights of female students by allowing male students claiming to be female to use the girls' locker rooms and bathrooms. Supporters of the proposal disputed claims that the change would lead to problems in bathrooms or locker rooms.

• Oregon latest state to ban 'ex-gay' therapy

The nation's first openly bisexual governor, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown signed a ban on "ex-gay" therapy into law, the third jurisdiction in the country to ban widely discredited "ex-gay" conversion therapy for minors. Oregon joins three other jurisdictions — California, New Jersey and D.C. — that have already enacted a ban. The laws in California and New Jersey have also been upheld as constitutional by circuit courts with jurisdiction over those states. Meanwhile, the Illinois House of Representatives approved legislation that would protect LGBT minors from conversion therapy. Studies conducted by major mental health organizations and personal testimony from LGBT youth have shown that conversion therapy can create dangerous and even life-threatening effects, including depression, decreased self-esteem, substance abuse and suicidal behavior.

• Minnesota bill to refuse weddings

Months after Indiana provoked a national uproar with a law allowing people to refuse service to same-sex couples, a Minnesota senator on Thursday proposed a similar — but more limited — measure in Minnesota. State Sen. Paul Gazelka, R-Nisswa, said business owners with strong opposition to same-sex marriage shouldn't be forced to cater to those ceremonies. "I was one of the legislators who opposed gay marriage, but even then I said that gays and lesbians should be able to live as they choose," Gazelka said. "I'm simply asking that Christians and people of faith be allowed to live as they choose without ... threat of punishment."

Jindal issues order on religious freedom

Potential presidential candidate Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal has issued an executive order to protect people who exercise their religious beliefs on matters related to same-sex marriage. He said: "This Executive Order will prohibit the state from denying or revoking a tax exemption, tax deduction, contract, cooperative agreement, loan, professional license, certification, accreditation, or employment on the basis the person acts in accordance with a religious belief that marriage is between one man and one woman."

• Anti-bullying bill signed by Nev. governor

Nevada Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval signed anti-bullying legislation that creates an anti-bullying office in the state's Department of Education and provide resources to report incidents. Nevada joins 17 other states and Washington, D.C., in enacting anti-bullying laws that include a provision protecting students based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

• Senators ask Pentagon to add protections

In a letter signed by 22 Democrats and one Republican, the senators have called on Defense Secretary to implement named protections for gay, lesbian, and bisexual service members. The question of whether sexual orientation would be added to equal employment opportunity policies in the military was raised by reporters and advocates even before the repeal of DADT took effect in September 2011.

• Gallup: 60% support same-sex marriage

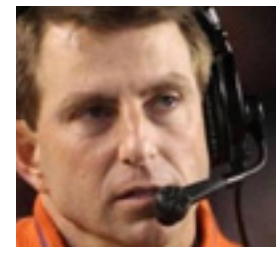
Support for same-sex marriage has reached a record high, according to a recent Gallup tracking poll. Sixty percent of Americans now support legally recognized same-sex marriages that carry the same rights as traditional marriages, compared with 37 percent who believe such marriages should not be considered valid. This is the highest level of support witnessed by Gallup since the organization began asking the question in 1996. Back then, 27 percent of Americans supported same-sex marriage. In the past year alone, the level of support has risen by five points to its current high. Also, Gallop reports for the first time, a majority of Americans say same-sex orientation is something gays and lesbians are born with rather than something that is determined by their upbringing or environment. Over the past 15 years, Americans had been much more closely divided on the issue. And in the 1970s and 1980s, majorities attributed same-sex orientation to environmental factors rather than innate characteristics.

• Girl Scouts welcome transgender girls

Girl Scouts

The Girl Scouts the of USA is maintaining its 4-year-old policy of allowing transgender girls in the fold, despite the frustrations of conservative critics. "Our position is not new," said the Girl Scouts' Andrea Bastiani Archibald. "If a girl is recognized by her family, school and community as a girl and lives culturally as a girl, [the] Girl Scouts is an organization that can serve her in a setting that is both emotionally and physically safe." In 2012, a Denver troop attracted accolades and criticism for allowing a transgender girl to join its troop. One side effect: Supporters encouraged people to buy more cookies from their local troops while opponents advised people to stay away from the treats. The decision has raised the ire of conservative religious groups, which claimed that the Girl Scouts would be allowing boys "who are confused" to join.

• Coach asked not to speak



Clemson University head football coach Dabo Swinney should not appear at a fundraiser for a South Carolina group that opposes gay marriage, the top Democrat in that state's House has said. Swinney was to appear June 2 at an event for the Palmetto Family Council, a conservative advocacy group that opposes same-sex marriage and abortion, and often allies itself with S.C. Republicans. "I find it highly inappropriate that Coach Swinney would appear at a fundraiser for an organization that is so openly discriminatory and politically motivated," House Minority Leader Todd Rutherford, D-Richland, said in a statement. "I cannot fathom why Coach Swinney or anyone else would knowingly assist a group whose mission is to fight against equal rights and equal treatment of others." Family Council president Oran Smith, who helped craft South Carolina's 2006 gay-marriage ban amendment, said Swinney will be honored for his Christian testimony, not political reasons. "Like any other South Carolina citizen, he should be free to speak where he would like to," said Smith, who has led the Palmetto Family Council for 14 years.

Lancaster Story Circle Talks Gay History

By Central Voice

About 25 people gathered April 29 at the Community Gallery, Lancaster County Community Foundation to form a "story circle," the term used to describe what happens when individuals get together to remember their collective past.

Loveland

"The technique brings out everyone's memories," Barry Loveland says, lead organizer of the award-winning History Project. "One story leads to another as participants jog their collective memories."

On the panel were Mary Merriman, Joe Burns, David Leas, and Anthony Lascoskie. Mark Stoner led the discussion that covered the 1970s to the present. As each of the panelists shared their stories the interlocking pieces of the historical puzzle fell into place. Eventually the audience joined in like mortar between the bricks of fish of the story shared by successive generations of LGBT Lancaster residents.

One man talked about being knifed years ago leaving the Tally Ho, a gay bar in Lancaster City. Memories of a local adult bookstore being bombed on two separate occasions where shared and somber voices. Merriman noted that until 12 people died from AIDS in the early years of the Adamic, no one wanted to pay any attention to what was at. Burns talked about how people got together in "organic" ways meeting in kitchens and living rooms in small groups to first support one another and then to make plans to educate government officials and the public on gay issues. Leas noted that when the HIV crisis hit the region "we came together to help one another in so many different ways". Laskoskie remembers having lots of fun as men and women organized to let Lancaster no that LGB T people lived among them. "I am a Junior and my father would always say please remember to add the Junior to your name when you're being quoted by the press," he said.

Many of the activist activities emanated from the Pink Triangle Coalition, active from 1991 until about 2001. Within the decade it functioned participants expanded and contracted the number of people involved in the types of activities they pursue space "we came together in so many different ways that eventually benefit not only gay community but the city and county as a whole," Laskoskie said.

From left: Anthony Lascoskie, Jr.; Mark Stoner, David Leas, Mary Merriman, and Joseph Burns.

-Central Voice photos

Mary Merriman

Mary Merriman is a retired ordained clergyperson with Metropolitan Community Church, having served two congregations, including as pastor of Lancaster's Vision of Hope Metropolitan Community Church. She is now a licensed social worker and employed by Grandview United Methodist Church as a Visitation Pastor.

Merriman is founder and CEO of Polk AIDS Support Services, Lancaster AIDS Project, and Hillsborough Counties Crisis Intervention, Lancaster Domestic Violence Project, YWCA Program Committee, co-founder of Pink Triangle Coalition, Unity Coalition, Mid-Atlantic District Committee, Penn State Hershey Medical Center Diversity Commission, member of Embrace, Trainer for the Northeast Reconciling Ministries Project, and Central PA LGBT Oral History Project interviewer. She has also taught at Harrisburg Area Community College, Temple University and Widener University. In 1993, she orchestrated the purchase of the first church property in Southeast PA by an LGBT organization. In 1995, Merriman was the recipient of the Jean Royer Kohr Award by the Lancaster Women's Alliance for her work with children with HIV.

David Leas

Leas is presently a partner at SunWorks, etc. LLC which fabricates and installs custom concrete counter tops as well as interior and exterior concrete decorative elements.

He was born in Columbia and at the age of 20 was one of the founding members of Gays United Lancaster in the 1970s. He helped expand the geographical footprint of the organization's newsletter to serve "rural Pennsylvania" to better serve the needs of the LGBT community at the time. He was active in the PA Rural Gay Caucus.

Leas and a partner owned and operated a restaurant/nightclub at the Railroad House in Marietta, PA, from 1976 to 1985. After selling his business interest, he started a catering operation and shared a bakeshop with a high school acquaintance. He had

continued on page 22

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Cuba Faces Change

By Frank Pizzoli

"I am Fidel Castro and we have come to liberate Cuba," soured years ago.

What has not curdled is the spirit of the Cuban people, according to recent visitors to the island.

Central Voice talked to local gay artist Joaquin Calles Gucman, who migrated to the US from Cuba in 2000. We also have nuanced observations from French journalist Frederic Martel and political strategist Karl Fritsch. Both recently travelled to Cuba.

Venereo

Our last Cuba story (Nov-Dec 2013) revealed the strongly-held positions of Harrisburg veterinarian Dr. José Venereo. The seed's of Venereo's revolution against Castro were planted early in his life.

In a story from a Hollywood script, Venereo's father met and eventually married the daughter of an anti-Castro military sergeant with whom he was jailed. Both Venereo's grandfathers were successful Cubans who met the Castro regime's disfavor. Thus his strong anti-Castro feelings go back generations.

As a gay child, Venereo faced, like all Latin cultures, a Cuban culture embedded in "Machismo," a belief in the supremacy of men over women that also sees gay men as without masculinity or valued human qualities. Venereo, 46, did not come out of the closet until he was 32.

"I had an openly gay uncle and cousin. My family would make unkind remarks about them so I knew very early in life what being different was all about," Venereo said. Like children bullied for being gay or different, he absorbed the negative messages. "I was a big homophobe. I dated married men. I convinced myself that if they were married they couldn't be gay. And because I was having sex with a married man who wasn't gay, I couldn't be gay either," Venereo said of the tortured logic of his earlier years.

"Today, I like myself very much," Venereo said with a grin.

Fritsch

Local York artist Joaquin Calles Gucman, 26, faced a similar but updated version of Venereo's journey. He was born in Cuba in 1988 and migrated to the US in 2007.

He explained that he came out at the age of 16 but, like Venereo, was sent to a psychologist that the gay part quote fixed". Although he was a straight A student "I was still viewed as flawed" and "no matter what I did in my life that black mark would be against me," he said.

Calles Gucman explains the political realities that all Cuban citizens face.

"The Cuban government decides everything for individuals," he explained. He studied psychology to the Masters degree level. "But none of that mattered. There were no openings for 'white psychologists' as the government explained. Eventually he developed his artistic talents, doing installation work that combines video, sound, and dance.

"You would find yourself living around gayness and your opposition to communism. You hide everything in your life in one way or another you make compartments for your personalized your business life and whatever is important to you," Calles Gucman explained.

And although there is no official Cuban policy working against LGBT civil rights that does not mean, Calles Gucman explains, that all Cubans are on the same page. "It's a cultural thing. There are various levels of acceptance in different places on the."

Beautiful and complicated is how political strategist Karl Fritsch describes Cuba.

Fritsch travelled to Cuba with his boyfriend Evan over the New Year's holidays for 10 days. They visited Holquin, Baracoa, Guantanamo (the city not the base), Santiago and Havana.

"It is an amazingly beautiful and complicated place," he said.

He's a person who sees both sides of issues, having worked on both Republican and Democratic sides of the aisle - for Iowa's Republican Congressman Jim Nussle and Senators Lamar Alexander, Tennessee, and John McCain, Arizona, and later with Democrats Howard Dean, New York Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter, and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

"Tough to say what the mood of the Cuban people is overall since we saw so much of the country from the poor rural areas around Holguín and Baracoa to the places with more money like Santiago and Havana," he said.

"Uniformly though the people we encountered were happy. His friend Evan is a high school music teacher and choir director. "He was particularly thrilled with how big of a role music plays in every aspect of Cuban life," Fritsch said.

"We also met the The Industriales, Havana's premier baseball team which, as season ticket holders for the MLB's Washington Nationals, was an amazing experience. Baseball plays such a huge role in Cuban life as the national sport," Fritsch shared.

Fritsch also ran into what Calles Gudman described. He encountered "state" employees "who were responsible for towing the party line and talking up the Castros," he said.

One of the funniest things he heard from the official government representatives involved mosquitoes. "The people (read government) decided there would be no more mosquitoes because they carry disease, so, they declared, 'We don't have mosquitoes anymore,'", he explained. "Of course, some of us had mosquito bites on our arms and legs from a late night relaxing by the pool," he said.

Overall it was abundantly clear that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decades long American embargo have been a one-two punch on the Cuban people, "holding them back from economic and technological progress (no Internet in Cuba, or spotty at best) and in many cases trapping them in crushing poverty," Fritsch said.

Even under the heavy weigh of US isolation, "Cubans are very aware, virtually everyone, of the US thaw and are almost uniformly excited," Fritsch said. "We heard no opposition from anyone though I'm sure some are likely opposed, no group of people are 100% one way or the other."

Everyone Fritsch spoke with was excited to meet Americans. "Cuba greets a few million tourists each year but a relatively small percentage of those tourists are American."

Although there is no official government policy against LGBT Cubans, does the cultural history of Cuba make for discrimination and exclusion?

Martel

French journalist Frederic Martel, author of Global Gay, focusing on the gay civil rights as human rights organizations begin to focus on LGBT issues, tells *Central Voice* a sense of freedom is creating visibility for LGBT Cubans.

After a 10-day visit to Cuba in May, Martel said although LGBT people are feeling free and visible, many believed that Castro's 60s revolution "would be a more democratic. Some Cuban activists believed that the then-Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), or Mao's China or maybe even Cuba would become the model for the LGBT community."

Instead, the USSR put gays in Siberian camps. China killed gay citizens during Mao's Cultural Revolution. Cuba tortured gays with "electic shock" treatments (not unlike similar treatments here in the US), hoping to turn them straight. "Cuban history regarding gays has been a joke. San Francisco's gay 'Castro gayborhood' did more to advance the gay revolution than the Fidel Castro family."

Regarding the Cuban "reality" versus "perception," Martel says "private, non-commercial sexual relations between same-sex consenting adults 16 and over have been legal in Cuba since 1979, although same-sex relationships are not presently recognized by the state as a possible marriage." Public antipathy towards LGBT people is high, reflecting regional norms.

The cultural Machismo noted by Venereo and Calles Gudman persists. "Although this has eased somewhat since the 1990s, and there currently are educational campaigns on LGBT issues by Fidel Castro's niece and daughter of Cuban president Raul Castro, Mariela Castro, of the National Center for Sex Education, Martel still has mixed feelings.

"On the one hand, gays are everywhere. In La Habana and you can find parties, bars, a gay beach. If you walk on the Malecon there are hundreds of gays, free and happy," he says, but "a t the same time, LGBT people are under total control." He has been arrested in Cuba for nothing more than walking with other gay people on the beach.

Martel says that "Police are checking ID cards all the time. You cannot create any LGBT organization." He thinks that although Mariela Castro is a genuine gay friendly activist, "she hasn't changed anything."

On the contrary, "the LGBT movement cannot exist because she exists as a symbol. She is an apparatchik of a dictatorship. And LGBT rights don't exist in a country where you don't have human rights nor rule of law," Martel says.

When will the Castro family be gone?.

One scenario is that "Cuba has a change in leadership, from one man, but not a change in the basic regime," Martel says. The military can still govern Cuba after the deaths of the Castros.

The second option is a mix of what he calls the Russian, Chinese or Vietnamese model.

"The military and apparatchik elite convert to the tourist-economic industry and allow a kind of change of the regime," Martel explains.

The third option, he says, is the President Obama and European Union way which changes their relationship to Cuba, "by allowing more tourism and business exchange which may provoke a real change in the regime."

Whatever happens, Martel is sure of two things.

"Nothing will be done by Cuban President Raul Castro alone," without prodding. And he is "no Gorbachev!," known for his softening of relations with the West right before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Legendary Rollerina

Affirmation *cont'd from page one*

hard, the government can tolerate it – and that makes the government look good when its human rights record is not looking good," she said.

Nguyen plans to retire from "the pride business," as she calls it, in about two years. In May, Nguyen, a graduate student at Penn State Harrisburg, received a master's degree in psychology from the university, and hopes to fight for gay rights throughout the world. "I like to empower communities," she said. "If the people are empowered, they can change things."

Before she left Middletown – "a sleepy town just outside of Philadelphia," as the popular Vietnamese Web site *Andofotherthings.com* described the borough to its Vietnamese followers – she staged the U.S. premiere of a Vietnamese documentary on the Asian country's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community, "Red over the Rainbow," in which she appears.

In the documentary, Nguyen and other gay and lesbian citizens in Vietnam describe the pressure in their culture to remain closeted. In 2012, "the attitude was still pretty homophobic" in Vietnam, though not as prone to violence against the gay community as other cultures, Nguyen said.

"We don't promote violence as a solution in things we don't feel OK with," she said. "On the other hand, I think that Confucian culture has really prescribed rules for men and women in cultural ways."

In Vietnam, it is difficult to be open about your sexuality because family and friends are "close," Nguyen said. "You cannot simply have your life any way you want," she said.

The effects of gay rights movements like Nguyen's VietPride have been interesting. Taxi drivers who encountered the bicycle procession as it made its way through the streets of communist Hanoi last year understood signs calling for gay rights, but did not understand why participants took the risk of angering the government by carrying signs that proclaimed, "Love is a human right." Marching for gay rights was one thing, but marching for human rights seemed decidedly more radical.

"For them, gay rights and human rights are two different things," Nguyen said. " 'Human rights' is a very sensitive thing in Vietnam. They know it's something dangerous and you could be put in jail for it."

VietPride showed Vietnam that there indeed were gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in their society, which was quite a step forward. Before the first march three years ago, "I didn't know if the LGBT community existed there," Nguyen said.

She left Middletown somewhat surprised that Americans were not more accepting of the LGBT community. While she had little time to socialize in Middletown during her studies, she did travel to Philadlephia, New York and Boston, and found that America "is a bit less accepting than I had expected," she said.

Local Buses Go to NYC Pride

By John Folby, History Project Steering Committee

Thanks to the efforts of the History Project's small group of volunteers and student interns, we are finally making headway collecting histories from a growing list of willing narrators.

As we listen to the historian's story and their coming out experience, one component that usually emerges relates to the story teller's participation in a Gay Pride event for the first time. Just observing the story teller's body language, facial expressions and tone of voice, it is obvious that attending a Pride event for the first time has a profound effect. It's almost as though there an unspoken message that you are not out until you've gone to such an event.

Yes, we know that we are everywhere, but being with hundreds and thousands of our LGBT brothers and sisters reinforces the fact that we are not alone.

Some narrators considered attending a Pride event as cathartic, participation validates their sexual preference. Some story tellers said they cried with joy being among such large crowds of individuals with the same preferences. Still others say it's as though they've been welcomed home after a long time in another world.

Whether your Pride experience takes place in Harrisburg, York, Lancaster, Reading, eastern or western PA, nothing compares to Gay Pride in NYC where it all began in 1969.

Jerry Brennan, a well known resident of Harrisburg, an advocate, an activist, a mentor and founder of the Harrisburg Chapter of Dignity, loved Gay Pride NYC. Jerry and a small group of friends took the train for the first NYC Gay Liberation March 1969. From that first event, he and his friends generated so much excitement for the event that several years later, Jerry was renting buses to transport the ever- emerging LGBT community in the region to NYC to experience the event themselves.

As a member of the local Dignity group, I decided to take that first bus trip to NYC Pride. There were Gay Pride events in Pittsburgh when I moved here in 1975 but I never participated. NYC Pride changed my gay life forever. The trip seemed rather short and the moment the bus drove into Greenwich Village you could feel the energy in the air.

We were all eager to get off the bus and report to our designated starting point but before that Jerry had something to give each of us. He had created signs for each of us to carry, representing every state in the country. By luck of the draw, I became a citizen of Hawaii. We would be marching with Dignity National and Jerry wanted people along the parade route to know we were from across the country.

However, just waiting for the hundreds of groups to form was a test of patience As hundreds of others joined our group in the streets of Greenwich Village, we were entertained by street vendors selling anything they though an LGBT customer might covet. Stonewall Inn T's, baseball caps, feather boas, balloons, tiaras just to name a few items. Keep in mind, 1977 was a year before the Rainbow Flag was created in San Francisco and embraced as our own symbol of Pride or there probably would have been thousands of rainbow motif items to choose from.

Aside from the street vendors, the gathering Dignity units were suddenly aware we were being watched from the second floor windows of an old building. To our surprise and yes, delight, five of the most popular gay porn stars of the 70's and 80's were waving, cheering and taking pictures of us! The crowd roared screamed and applauded and a few minutes later, parade marshals were ushering us out of the Greenwich Village for the march uptown to the Sheep Meadow in Central Park.

The march experience was heart pounding sensory overload. Thousands of marchers representing every possible community group you could image came to NYC. I can't begin to list all of the various groups and interests represented in the parade but one NYC icon made a lifelong memory.

Legendary Rollerina

Skating among the marchers was Rollerina, known to most New Yorkers but not to many outsiders. She skated from group to group in her gold and white couture skating ensemble and waving a star tipped wand. People on the sidewalks cheered as she blew kisses and passed her wand over their heads.

We finally arrived in the Sheep Meadow and listened enthusiastically to local and National LGBT advocates who reinforced our sense of strength and power. Two hours later we were heading back downtown to party in Greenwich Village before heading back to Harrisburg. The trip home was unusually quiet, I think most of us were trying to process everything we had seen and heard and anticipating a return trip the following year.

Eventually, transcripts of the History Project's interviews will be available online and you'll be able to read other firsthand stories from other narrators. Until then, I would strongly recommend that you consider not only participating in your community's Pride events but add Pride NYC to your bucket list.

New Voice:

Meet Narci Cissom

By Sophonda Cox

When out and about, one never knows who one may meet. That's how I found my new BFF Narci Cissom. She was standing there with a hand on her hip, shaking her head in wonder.

She was watching a silent disco dance in progress. I fell in love right then and there!

As Marina Zheng reported for *The New York Observer* the Silent Disco dance party was a featured event at the Central Park Conservancy Festival. Three DJ's simultaneously played Top 40 hits, Motown Classics, and 80s Tunes. Partiers decided which genre to groove with by choosing the corresponding station on fluorescent headsets, each color-coded to the type of music selected. Each partier listened through their headset, isolated from other revelers.

"I'm thinking no one here is gettin' any tonight, even though it's a party," Narci said as I walked over to introduce myself.

From the cover of Men's Health to the halls of Downton Abbey.

"Anyone who thinks this is fun is probably really bad sex anyway!" I answered.

"They'd be no fun at an orgy!" Narci yelped.

And that's when we realized that we could say anything we wanted. No one could hear us!

And baby did we, *uh,* bust a nut!

"Yo, snoot nose! How you gonna hear Mom's helicopter?"

"Why do you look like you just smelled dog poop, dude? Not having any fun? Take off those silly headphones and get near a warm body!"

"While we 're talking about gettin' all stupid over 'The Gay,' I guess we'll have to claim former Congressman Aaron Schock," Narci suggests.

We've found a new way to disco-nnect.

"Is he that Mega-Queen who decorated his office like Downton Abbey?" I ask.

"That's her!," Narci confirms.

Here's what retired Congressman Barney Frank said: "He spends an awful lot of time at the gym for a straight guy."

"I wonder if he moisturizes daily?" I muse. "Where is it written down that at the end of every news cycle we have to let all these screw ups on the gay bus?" I ask.

"Because we understand what oppression does to individuals. More importantly, we understand what Internalized Homophobia does to those who swallow it," Narci points out.

"I guess that's we have Pride every year, huh? The Kingdom ain't come yet," I tell Narci.

Tootles all!

P.S. - And, I found your sex toy! Elena Lenina was wearing it on her head at the 68th Annual Cannes Film Festival. Bitch!

(Photo: Wikimedia)

Oh, Elena, what were you thinking, girl!

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Congressman:
Gay Marriage Led to Baltimore Riots

Right Wing Watch reported that Rep. Biill Flores (R., Texas), when speaking with Family Research Council President Tony Perkins on his show Washington Watch said, "Look at what is going on in Baltimore today, you see the issues that are raised there." Then he made the insane connection between gay marriage and the Baltimore riots. He believes the former leads to the breakdown of the traditional family, which leads to poverty and thus causes rioting.

"Let's talk about poverty, for instance. The single best indicator of whether or not a child is going to be in poverty or not is whether or not they were raised by a two-parent household or a single parent household, so the breakdown of the family has contributed to poverty.," he said. "Look at what is going on in Baltimore today, you see the issues that are raised there. Healthy marriages are the ones between a man and a woman because they can have a healthy family and they can raise children in a way that's best for their future, not only socially but psychologically, economically, from a health perspective. There is nothing like traditional marriage that does that for a child. Each of us have a mother and a father and there is no way to get around that."

legal column

By Leo L. Dunn, Attorney at Law

Pride in Planning

As you attend Harrisburg's Pride Festival this year commit to making sure your legal documents are in order and your loved ones are protected. The four basic documents every GLBT individual should have in place by the time they reach age 40 are a health care directive, a financial power of attorney, a will, and a HIPPA waiver. Age 25 is better, but age 40 is when most people start accumulating wealth and to consider health issues for the long run. If you are in a committed relationship, you should also get married!

Priority one: a living will/health care directive. This protects your decision making now, while you are still alive, in the event you have a medical emergency. It ensures that the person you want making decisions on your behalf is in control and cannot be 'shunted' aside by your next of kin if you are not married. Remember, even though next of kin may be very supportive today, tomorrow may be different. It can also assure that your partner and friends have access to you if you are hospitalized.

Priority two: a durable power of attorney. This also protects you now, while you are still alive. It ensures that the person you trust to handle your finances and day-to-day matters is responsible for them and empowered to perform tasks for you in the event you have an accident, or simply need to be away for an extended period due to your employment.

Priority three: a last will and testament. This protects your intended beneficiaries after you die. It ensures that your assets go to the person(s) or organization(s) you want to enrich after you die. More importantly, in the case of an unmarried couple, it makes sure that a house owned in one person's name but paid for by both goes to the other partner after death of the first. It also assures that said partner's family can't talk you into going for a walk on the beach after the funeral and having all the locks changed as you are strolling along in grief. This actually happened in Florida a few years ago.

Priority four: a HIPAA waiver. Closely associated with priority one, a living will, this allows the person you designate (usually your health care agent) to have access to your medical records if needed in order to make medical decisions for you. This power is implied in your living will/health care directive, but this document expressly provides the power.

Marriage: Tying the knot protects your partner to the highest level the law currently allows. Make it a priority. I recommend prenuptial or postnuptial agreements be done while you are in love, so that if the flame dims later, asset division is already done and not a fight waiting to happen. Some of the most important items to consider are family heirlooms, family property, pensions and 401(k)s.

Of course, to truly protect yourself and your loved ones, you may need additional documents: a cohabitation agreement, prenuptial agreement, guardianship, trust, new deed, or business transferal contract. That's why you should sit down with an attorney and go over your individual needs. They probably won't be the same as your friend, Adam, who did everything himself. Besides you want to make this easier, not harder, for yourself and your loved ones.

Leo Dunn is an attorney and counselor-at-law practicing in Harrisburg area with a focus on the estate planning needs of the GLBT community.

Ally in the Academy

By Trum Simmons
Harrisburg Area Community College

Going the Distance

Having used Thomas Paine in my last column to speak of how religious faith needs to be balanced with reason in discussing complex issues, I now have a couple more founding fathers in mind.

I've been reading "Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power," a wonderful book by Jon Meacham. I also have open Richard Goldstein's new book, "Another Little Piece of My Heart," in which he details his experience as a rock-music critic before moving on to gender and sexuality.

Goldstein is considered by many to be the founder of rock criticism, but he also is very important to the LGBTQ communities across America, for no one has written more insightfully and passionately about them.

When are we going to have a national conversation on race?

Both Jefferson and Goldstein model a productive way of dealing with complex and troubling issues, for they go deep below the surface of the debates. And as we celebrate another Pride season, I believe we all need to follow their examples.

It's easy to find tons of commentary on the cultural significance of same-sex marriage or finding true equality in the workplace. There are plenty of pundits who are well armed with colorful sound bites.

But do we have enough serious, thoughtful, insightful commentary? We talk a lot about LGBTQ issues, but when you get below the surface of our national conversation on gender and sexuality, where are we?

I say national conversation to point to the question that has been asked over and over in the past couple of decades: When are we going to have a national conversation on race? When will we be ready?

Of course you can say, we have been engaging in a national conversation on race ever since the early civil rights movement. But of what quality has that conversation been?

It hasn't gotten very far below the surface, as far as I can see. And as for any deep national conversation on gender and sexuality, we are far behind the one on race.

Psychotherapist and educator Carl Rogers had some profound ideas about teaching and learning that were widely published after they appeared in his 1969 book "Freedom to Learn."

"I find it a very troubling thing to think, particularly when I think about my own experiences and try to extract from those experiences the meaning that seems genuinely inherent in them," he wrote. And when he thought about the implications of this thinking, "I shudder a bit at the distance I have come from the commonsense world that everyone knows is right."

When it came to race, as about everything else, Jefferson thought deeply and widely. As a product of his times he didn't get very far by our standards today, but he tried. All you have to do is read some of his voluminous correspondence to see this.

Or consider his views on religion and, especially, Christianity. Many people know about the so-called "Jefferson Bible," which consisted of his edited version of the New Testament. (He didn't think much of miracles.) This was the result of his deep thinking about religion, faith and reason.

Jefferson championed "this blessed country of free inquiry and belief," and he knew he was therefore—with Carl Rogers—quite far from "the commonsense world that everyone knows is right."

If you read Richard Goldstein's new book you will see a similar mind at work as he talks about moving on from rock criticism to writing on civil rights and finally to LGBTQ issues. I first met Richard when I was setting up a panel on how to cover AIDS at a student media convention in New York City in the mid-80s.

I was looking for a couple of journalists who were doing good pieces on AIDS and was told by AIDS activists in New York that Richard was doing the best writing about the epidemic and its ramifications.

This led to a 15-year period during which Richard and I co-presented on LGBTQ civil rights and the difference between journalism in the 60s and the 90s, among other subjects. In these sessions and in our many conversations over coffee, I was taken by his passion, fierce intelligence and his refusal to look for easy answers.

That is where I end this column. It's easy to find easy answers to our challenges, but easy is not the way to go. Engaging in the troubling business of deep thinking is what meeting the challenges of achieving social justice requires.

transgender column

By Joanne Carroll
president of TransCentralPA

"Coming out" an act of bravery

TransCentralPA will be busy with Pride events over the summer. Lancaster on June 20, Reading on July 19, Harrisburg on July 25, York on August 2, and then in the fall we will be at Millersville University in Lancaster.

Sounds ambitious even to me; and with that as a lead in let me share with you something that should give us all some pride. Of course, in some ways, it is old news. However, it's a gift keeps on giving, because it is never out of the headlines as new revelations continue to unfold.

The coming out of Bruce Jenner as a transgender woman is a transformative moment in LGBT history. Jenner's public persona, both as an Olympian and as a part of the Kardashian hype, has raised public awareness of the enduring struggle that so many in the trans-community face and for LGB-identified persons as well. Public awareness, leads to understanding, and understanding leads to support, and support to affirmation.

While it is more specifically beneficial to trans-equality, everyone under the LGBT umbrella should gain from this historic "coming out".

As Jenner related his/her history to Diane Sawyer (I will continue to use the combined female pronouns until "she" is revealed), his/her perceived gender identity went back to early childhood. Memories of various milestones were recounted that supported the evidence of a life albeit lived in the public eye, was kept from view. How many of us can relate to that experience? I certainly can because I was in denial for the majority of my life, and I suspect some of you can as well.

Public opinion on this story has been mixed. Of course the haters will always do everything to delegitimize our community. What I found interesting is that so many people have been generally supportive. After all, it is almost Un-American to attack someone that brought so much favorability to our Olympic efforts.

The concern expressed, and I must admit I share in that concern, is that his/her transition will turn out to be a media circus, just like that infamous reality series that is the Kardashians.

Diane Sawyer conducted the interview tastefully and professionally. She avoided the "stupid" questions or statements that so many others have asked or made. Questions like "when will you make the "change" or "what or when did you decide to become a woman?" "Will you be going all the way?" and statements that simply are too ignorant to mention.

I was caught up in the emotions Jenner displayed, and when he/she cried, I cried too, because I remember too well my own coming out moments. What I found very compelling was the statement by his/her son, saying to the effect that while he always regarded his father as brave, this "coming out", was a greater act of bravery. Further, one of Jenner's statements was if his/her story could contribute to the understanding of gender dysphoria, then going through transition in a public way would be well worth the scrutiny.

I hope that we will look back at this snippet of LGBT history as truly significant, and I encourage you to watch the unfolding of the story with an unjaundiced view. I will, and with an eye to giving Jenner the benefit of the doubt. Jenner is now self-identified as Caitlyn and is featured on the July cover of *Vanity Fair.*

Joanne Carroll is the current President of TransCentral PA. TransCentral PA is committed to providing advocacy and caring support for transgender individuals, their significant others, families, friends and allies. TransCentralPA also provides gender education and information to businesses, organizations, educational institutions and governmental agencies.

Maryland's Taylor Launches Athlete Ally

As an athlete in high school and college, Hudson Taylor often observed the use of homophobic language and demeaning humor, especially in sports. Soon after enrolling at the University of Maryland, he befriended LGBT students in his theatre classes and became increasingly aware of the pain caused by homophobic behavior. Hudson, who is not gay, felt it was imperative he confront the reality sports often marginalize LGBT athletes, coaches and others through systemic homophobia and transphobia. He decided to take action as a straight ally to change athletic culture for the better. To stand in solidarity with the LGBT community, Hudson wore an LGBT equality sticker from the Human Rights Campaign on his wrestling headgear. Though he encountered criticism from his peers, but received positive attention from the media, and received thousands of emails from parents and closeted athletes, expressing thanks and sharing their own experiences of homophobia and transphobia in sports. This experience inspired Hudson to launch Athlete Ally.

arts & entertainment

Photo by John Powl, Under the Bridge Productions

Costume Exhibit *cont'd from page one*

Creating an exhibit that does justice to a career spanning four decades is a challenge. To say Paul has had a major impact on the local theatre scene is an understatement. Hundreds of costumes hang in the archive of Theatre Harrisburg that Paul has created. We are choosing 20 that will stand as representative of the wide range of creativity that Paul has demonstrated to the thousands of theater patrons who have seen these shows.

I got to spend a day in the life of Paul at his studio, learning much about the creative process involved in costuming a show. And it is not just one at a time. "I am sometimes juggling up to four shows simultaneously," says Paul. He is not only working on shows for Theatre Harrisburg but also creates costumes for some of the shows at Harrisburg Area Community College's student productions, where he is also an instructor.

Paul is well known to theater audiences in Harrisburg and throughout central Pennsylvania but there are many other dimensions to Paul's life and career of which many in the public are unaware. Paul has been an adjunct faculty member of Harrisburg Area Community College for the past ten years, developing their costume design classroom/shop; was an adjunct faculty member of the Bradley Academy for the Visual Arts in York for 19 years in costume design and related subjects, creating the fashion design curriculum.

Paul owns his own small business in custom costume and clothing design and fabrication and has done work for The Harrisburg Ballet, The Harrisburg Opera, Open Stage of Harrisburg, Hershey Entertainment and other clients in central PA, Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York. He was artist in residence in costume for the PA Council on the Arts in 1988 and 1989 and has won a national award for his work.

Paul is a founding member of the Harrisburg Gay Men's Chorus and founder of Lily White and Company, an organization that raised tens of thousands of dollars for local AIDS and LGBT community organizations. He holds a BA in English literature from St. Anselm College and a diploma in acting and design from the Drama Studio of London.

The exhibit will be mounted at two venues. The Historic Harrisburg Resource Center will feature a selection of 20 costumes that Paul designed and produced throughout his career. Historical photos showing the costumes as they were worn on stage, show program covers and Paul's design sketches will also be featured. Also included will be a photographic exhibit documenting the creative process that Paul follows when costuming a stage production, with photos by John Powl of Under the Bridge Productions of Lancaster.

The other exhibit venue is the LGBT Center of Central PA Gallery. Paul was the founder and creative force behind Lily White and Company, a local organization of female impersonators and other entertainers that produced many shows and performances throughout the region raising funds for HIV/AIDS and LGBT service organizations in the 1980's and 1990's. This exhibit will include a series of black and white photographs of many of the performers from Lily White shows by Baltimore photographer, Jack Radcliffe. Also included will be memorabilia of Lily White and Company shows, and personal items documenting Paul's life. Paul also sat for a video oral history interview with the LGBT Center of Central PA History Project and excerpts of that interview will be played at the opening reception.

The opening reception will be held Fri., Oct. 16, 6-9 p.m., at both venues in conjunction with Third in the Burg. Visitors to the opening reception will be encouraged to come in costume or mask and the event will feature refreshments and entertainment.

There will also be a special program Thurs., Oct. 22, 6-8 p.m. at the LGBT Center Gallery, a Story Circle that will feature Paul and other members of Lily White and Company who will share memories and stories about how Lily White was started, what they did and the impact they had on the LGBT community and HIV/AIDS services in the region through their fundraising. Historical video clips of performances of the group will be shown.

Recycling Words:

The poetry of Jack Veasey

ADVERTISING FOR LOVE
The model's projecting himself
Through the camera lens – he's
The photographer, too –
Like Narcissus, but he can't
Fall through. He smiles
With blinding perfect teeth,
Bats long-lashed eyes
Clear as a lake
No-one's allowed
To swim in.
But I'd bet some
Have drowned there.

IN PASSING
A pang of would-be pleasure
When you see his shoulder glisten
Just that way, the way
It never will
Again; you know
Whatever happens
Is once in a lifetime –
You've burned long enough
To learn. You will never
See again,
At just this angle,
This thing
No camera captures
Like your eyes.

If you could,
You might ask him
To hold that pose,
To make believe
Life is an art class,
Let your look
Last that much longer.
But a wave
Knocks him off-balance,

And you turn
Your glance away,
Down to the dark edge
Of white sand
That recedes
In the tide.

TO A GOOD CHRISTIAN AT THE WEEKLY OPEN READING
You don't meet anyone's eyes
When you arrive.
Sometimes we say hello
When we first see you –
Then we talk around you
Like you weren't there.
But we do know your name.
You don't appear to know
Any of ours.

This week,
You're wearing headphones.
You will wear them
Until you get up to read.
I hope that
Makes this easier for you.

When it's your turn
At the podium –
Before you read
Your latest
Fire and brimstone rant –
You say that some of us
Have got the wrong idea.
Christians, we believe,
Think that they're better than us.
That isn't the case –
Or shouldn't be. Christians
Shouldn't act
As though they are,
Since that creates
Stereotypes.

You know only too well
That you're no better than us.
You lust after women,
For example. And you did lots of
Bad, bad things
Before you were saved.
You know you are
Also
A sinner.

Then, one of us asks you a question:
"Do you think you're the only
Christian here?"
You look all around the room,
admitting,
"I don't know,"
As if you've never really
Looked at us before,
Though you've been coming here
for months.
There is a long moment of silence.
But, of course,
Nobody volunteers
Their truth to you.

I wonder, once again,
Just what you want from us.
I don't think
I need to wonder
What you have assumed about us,
Though I, too,
have made assumptions
About you.

One
Is that you project
The category "sinner"
Onto all the rest of us.
And that's the domino
That sets all others
Falling.

PASTOR DAMON
The crazy fundamentalist evangelist
Looks like a convict –
Beard, long hair, one arm
Sleeved with tattoos –
But he wants to be the warden
Of this naïve congregation.
His ministry
Is aimed at teens, a population
Easy to delude.
So he plays hardball
With their fear of
Their own hormones,
Their own wakening desires.
He calls the ones
"tormented by the demon
Homosexuality"
To make their way
Down to the floor at
The foot of the stage,
Where they weep and prostrate
themselves.
He tells them they can
"pray the gay away."
One girl confesses, weeping
Through a handheld microphone,
That she has been
Called names, ridiculed,
And persecuted
By her "normal" classmates.
Why can't she see
That here's more of the same?
She volunteers herself
For more abuse,
Of a more sinister variety;
Abuse that masquerades
As sympathy. Pastor Damon smiles,
And puts one ink-stained arm
Around her. Her life so far
Has been so circumscribed
That she can't see her "helper"
As he is –
A dangerous piece of rough trade,
Trying to coerce corroboration
Of the lies he tells himself,
About himself. Self-hatred is
The product this man's hawking.
He swoops down on her
As if she were a mouse.
She only sees
The shadows of the wings
He wears, and not
His deadly hunger, not
The slashing beak
He hides behind his Jesus beard.
She hasn't noticed how his first
name,
Damon, is one letter off
From "Demon."

About the poet: *Jack Veasey has published 12 books of poetry, including the brand mew "The Dance That Begins And Begins: Selected Poems 1973-2013" (The Poet's Press, Providence, RI 2015). His work has appeared in many literary magazines and several major anthologies. Veasey has often collaborated on exhibits and performances and recordings with artists working in other media; he collaborated on a number of exhibits with photographer Glynis Berger; two of his plays have been produced, by Theater Center Philadelphia, and Theater Of The Seventh Sister in Lancaster. He has written numerous songs working with guitarist David Snyder in the local folk-rock duo Open Book, and with Nashville-based pop recording artist Essra Mohawk. He hosted and co-produced literary radio programs for WITF FM in Harrisburg, and for WXPN FM in Philadelphia; and he has been a guest on several radio and television programs including "Culture And Main," "All Things Considered," and "Fresh Air." He is a Pushcart Prize nominee and has received a Fellowship From The PA Council On The Arts. He is currently collaborating with composer/conductor Adam Gustafson on a choral piece which the Harrisburg Gay Men's Chorus will perform at the Voices United concert this summer.*

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America's favorite Dragapella beauty shop quartet has served up a feast of music and comedy for over 20 years. Founded in 1993, they have performed Off-Broadway, in Las Vegas and at festivals and arts centers across the U.S. Their award-winning a capella singing, sharp satire and over-the-top drag have earned the Kinsey Sicks a diverse and devoted following.

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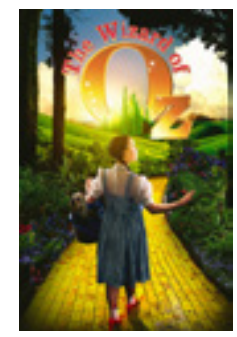
LIVE AT ROSE LEHRMAN

EVENTS FOR JULY AND AUGUST:

THE WIZARD OF OZ
June 2 - July 12
Fulton Theatre, Lancaster



The greatest family adventure of all time and the most elaborate retelling of this treasured gem will close our 2014/2015 Season. With the biggest set, complicated flying, enormous puppetry, high-tech video, stage hydraulics, and a cast of over 50 performers, it is planned to be the biggest event of our season. Even if you have seen it dozens of times before, you have NEVER seen it this way. Join us Over the Rainbow for the dazzling finale of this very special season. Tickets: 717-397-7425 or online

ZAPPA PLAYS ZAPPA
July 30, 8 p.m.
Whitaker Center

Sunoco Performance Theater - As a child in the Zappa family home, Dweezil Zappa recalls idolizing his father's amazing musical gifts as a composer and guitarist. After his father passed away in 1993 he felt moved to do something to honor Frank's life and pure talent; thus Zappa Plays Zappa emerged. Tickets: 717-214-ARTS (2787)

BOZ SCAGGS
July 26, 7:30 p.m.
Strand Theatre

Bozz-Scaggs' remarkable career dates back to the late 60s, when he performed with the Steve Miller Band and spanned decades with solo triumphs, such as Silk Degrees, Middle Man, Some Change and Digs. "I'm at a point where I'm having a lot of fun with music, more than ever," Boz Scaggs says about his spellbinding new album A Fool to Care. "It's like I'm just going wherever I want to go with it." Recording the album over four days at Blackbird Studio in Nashville made possible the participation of such notable guests as guitarist Reggie Young, steel guitarist Paul Franklin, Bonnie Raitt and Lucinda Williams both performing duets with Scaggs. Info: www.mystrandcapitol.org

FILM - THE GETTYSBURG STORY
June, July & August
Majestic Theater Cinema 1
Gettysburg College

The Gettysburg Story, a Jake Boritt film, is a 1-hour HD aerial tour of America's bloodiest battlefield. Narrated by actor Stephen Lang, the film uses cutting-edge technologies including high-definition radio control aerial drone cinematography, motion control time-lapse footage, and dynamic digital geo-location graphic maps. Show Times: Monday - Friday 4:00 p.m. & 5:30 p.m. / Saturday 2:00 p.m. / Sunday (no showing). Info: 717-337-8200; boxofficeinfo@gettysburg.edu

LA CAGE AUX FOLLES
July 23 - August 8
Sharadin Bigler Theatre

With music by tuneful master Jerry Herman of Hello Dolly fame and book by actor-playwright Harvey Fierstein, the original 1983 Broadway production garnered nine Tony Award nominations and six wins, including Best Musical, Best Score, and Best Book. In this hysterically funny musical comedy French Riviera nightclub owner Georges and his longtime love Albin feel they must conceal both their lifestyle and their ownership of the drag club downstairs when Georges' son Jean-Michel brings his fiancée's ultra-conservative parents home for dinner. Tickets: (717) 733-7966; epacboxoffice@gmail.com

NICK JONAS
Sept. 6, 7:30 p.m.
Hershey Theatre

Nick Jonas will bring his "Live in Concert "Tour to Hershey Labor Day weekend. The versatile recording artist, performer and actor sets out on the road in support of his critically-acclaimed self-titled solo album. Tickets can be purchased at the Hershey Theatre box office or by phone: 717-534-3405.

THE NORMAL HEART
July 25
Open Stage of Harrisburg

Open Stage of Harrisburg and The LGBT Center of Central PA are remounting the staged reading of The Normal Heart. Larry Kramer's landmark play about love, AIDS and New York in the 1980s chronicles the rise of the AIDS crisis in New York City as seen through the eyes of writer/activist Ned Weeks, the gay Jewish founder of a prominent HIV advocacy group. Tickets: 717-232-OPEN (6736)

Michael Cunningham 's Work Maintains

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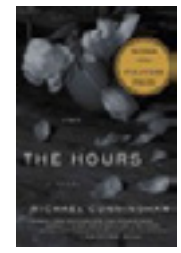
book reviews

By Deborah Battisti
Dauphin County Library System
www.dcls.org

Michael Cunningham won the Pulitzer Prize in 1999 for the first book on our list. He also wrote the screenplay for the 2003 movie of the same name with Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman and Julianne Moore. His novels are rich in characterization and the shifting complexities of human relationships. Below are some of his remarkable novels.



The Hours
Three stories within one beautifully written novel, tied together by an appreciation for the language of Virginia Woolf and a deep understanding of her depression. In the present, Clarissa plans a party for her friend, Richard, who is dying of AIDS; in 1949 Laura reads Mrs. Dalloway and faces her suffocating suburban life with a profound resignation, and in 1941 Virginia Woolf writes Mrs. Dalloway and contemplates suicide. If all this sounds like too much misery, it is leavened considerably by Cunningham's exquisite language, moments of humor and observation of small, but beautiful moments in every life.

Specimen Days
Written in 2006. The same group of characters--a young boy, an older man, and a young woman--are present in each historical period of this genre-bending, haunting, and transformative ode to life in New York. "An extraordinary book, as ambitious as it is generous . . . I promise you fun, marvels, adventure, love stories, plus the uninhibited exercise of a great natural writer and an inspired historian. . . . This is a transforming book, the lovely, tattered record of our time and place, and of our wish to prevail."--David Thomson, "The New York Observer

A Home at the End of the World
Cunningham's first major work, this 1990 novel follows two friends from boyhood into their 20s, when they form a triangle with a young woman in New York City. When she becomes pregnant, the three move to the country to set up housekeeping in Woodstock, embarking on a daring voyage toward a new vision of what a family can be. Publishers Weekly said "this is a gripping, haunting piece of work from a writer of real promise and power". Cunningham also wrote the screenplay for the 2004 movie with Colin Farrell, Robin Wright Penn, Dallas Roberts and Sissy Spacek.

Other books by Michael Cunningham
The Snow Queen, 2014, *By Nightfall*, 2010, *The Letter Q: Queer Writers' Notes to Their Younger Selves* (with other authors), 2012

Art Association Summer Soirees through Aug. 22

Back by popular demand, the Art Association of Harrisburg Summer Soirees continue through August 22. These garden art parties are all hosted by association patrons, with the proceeds benefitting the organization's extensive education and exhibition programs. The Hall Foundation is the sponsor of the six Soirees. All Soirees are Saturdays from 5 to 8 p.m., and all feature refreshments and great art.

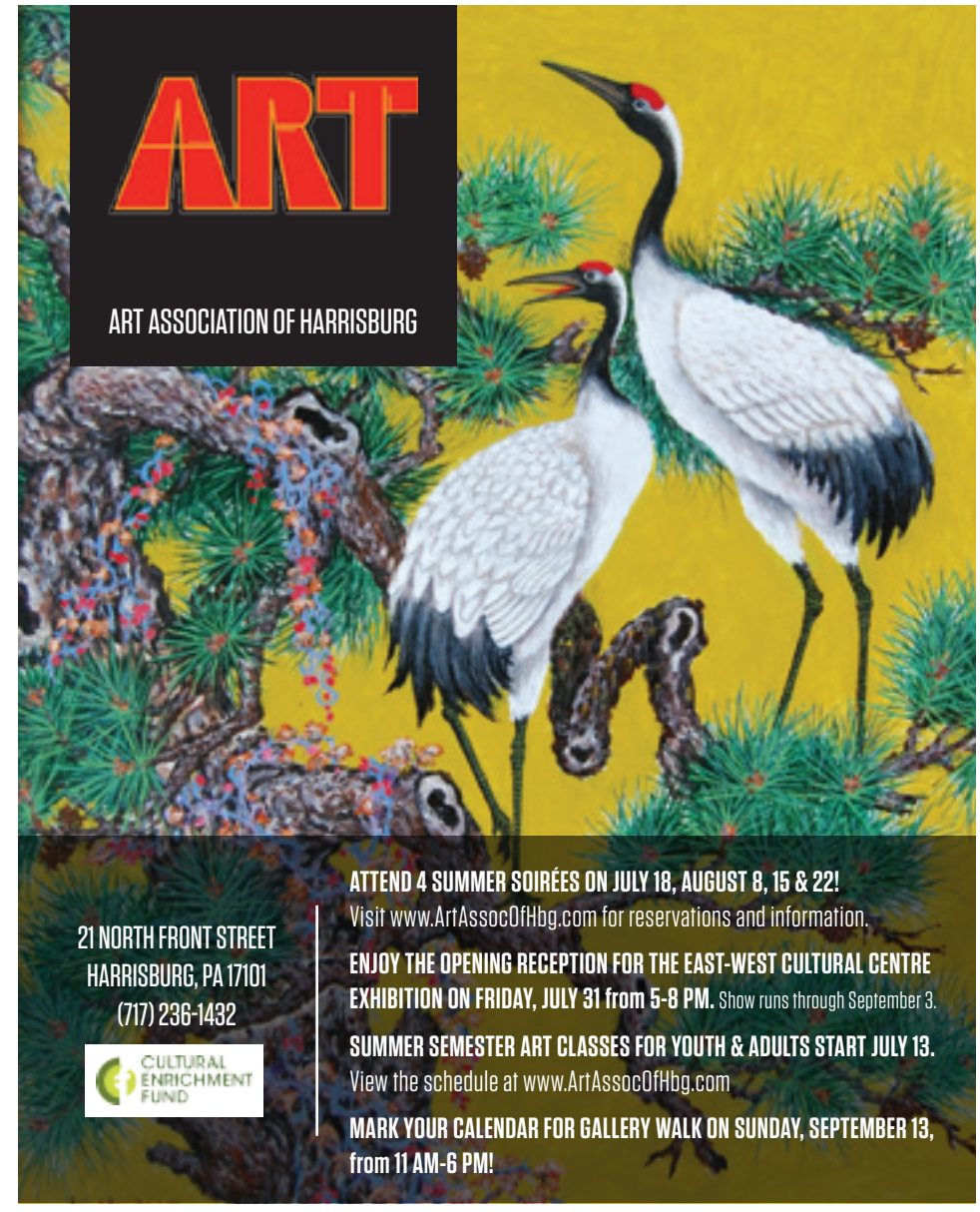
July 18 - David Mason and Todd Brown are the hosts for the July 18 Soiree in the Lewisberry area, with their contemporary home and wooded lot the setting for artwork of Mason, Sam Sneeder and Richard Florshutz. Both Sneeder and Mason are abstract painters, while Florshutz creates architectural relief stone carvings, watercolours and oils.

August 8 - Amy and Eric Huck will feature jewelry by Peggy Gekas, and paintings by Julie Riker, Chris Mackie and Mark C. Brown in their Lewisberry-area home and garden.

August 15 - Capital Blue Cross is hosting the Soiree on August 15 at their new Wellness Centre in Enola, showcasing paintings by Barbara Passeri Warfel, jewelry by Tom Wambach and photography by Jeff Wiles.

August 22 - Concluding the series will be the Soiree hosted by David Forney in his New Cumberland home, with deck and lawn overlooking the spectacular Susquehanna River, on August 22. Landscape painter Jonathan Frazier will be joined by abstract artists Thom Kulp, Joanne Finkle and Tanade Suveepattananot, and sculptural ceramist Amy Joy.

Reservations are $40 in advance, $45 at the door. Visit www.artassocofhbg.com to make reservations online, or call 717-236-1432.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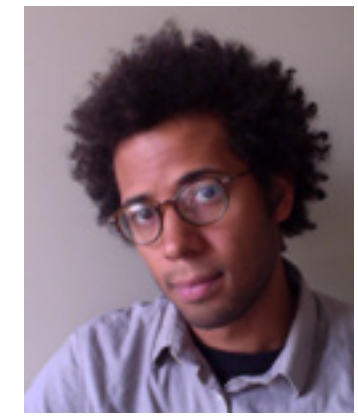
Hbg Man Launches Pub

By Central Voice



Casey Fletcher

After an ambitious launch of *Back40*, a visual and literary publication, Casey Fletcher says he's working on a second issue for sometime this Fall. Fletcher is the publication's founder, editor and designer.

His first issues, 100 copies, sport a protective plastic sleeve and a screen print. They can be found at The Susquehanna Art Museum, Little Amps Coffee Roasters (uptown), and Elementary Coffee Co. in the Broad Street Market.

"We're always looking to expand, and I felt that these locations exemplified the progressive, design conscious spirit of Harrisburg that the magazine is trying to channel," Fletcher explained.

"It's slow coming, mostly due to my adjusting to post-grad life and new schedules," Fletcher says. The first issue has gained the interest of some of his friends who are jumping in to help.

Fletcher is a visual artist and graphic designer living in Harrisburg. He has earned a BFA in studio art from Messiah College. "I grew up in Vermont, Ohio, and central Pennsylvania and have, at least tentatively, found a home here in Harrisburg," he says.

Fletcher thinks his having moved around a lot made him sensitive to the unique qualities of a given town. "After spending time in Harrisburg, I found a lot of material to work with. I love art and I love people, and it's those two things that keep me going," he says.

Fletcher says "art is nothing if it speaks between no one, and people are incomplete without the unique means of communication that visual art offers." That's why he makes art and magazines, "and hopefully some of it will create a meaningful conversation with someone."

He started the magazine "with the hope of connecting and promoting visual artists and authors primarily from Harrisburg, while also bringing in work from other cities." He's proud of the talent found in Harrisburg and felt that "introducing some added diversity was necessary." Fletcher also wanted to offer a platform for talented and well informed artists to locally showcase their work in a design conscious publication that caters to ideas and issues off the grid.

National LGBT Museum Selects New York

The Board of Directors of the National LGBT Museum has voted to base the museum in New York City and has elected longtime LGBT activist Kevin Jennings as its co-chair.

Founded in 2008 by Board Co-Chair Tim Gold, the National LGBT Museum engaged in an extensive visioning process (details of which can be found at www.nationallgbtmuseum.org), examined a number of possible sites, and held a number of meetings with elected officials and LGBT organizational leaders in New York before voting to choose New York at its January 2015 Board meeting. "New York simply makes sense," says Gold. "It is both the site of many pivotal events in the history of the U.S. LGBT civil rights movement as well as a top destination worldwide for LGBT tourists. We are excited about siting the museum in this great world city."

Gold went on to add, "We are also excited to have Kevin Jennings join our team as Board Co-Chair. A New York City resident, a historian by training, and a long-time leader in the LGBT movement, Kevin is the perfect partner to help lead the effort to establish this museum in New York City."

The Board will now focus on identifying sources of funding, staff, and a physical location now that the question of the permanent home for the museum has been settled. "Our dream is to have the museum open in time for the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion in June 2019," said Gold.

"The breakfast of champions"

Wheaties and General Mills, its parent company, supports the freedom to marry. Recently the company a commemorative box featuring Freedom to Marry's President Evan Wolfson. Wolfson is a long-time, acknowledged champion of marriage equality.

LOCAL REACTION:

Half of LGB Americans Identify as Christian

By Frank Pizzoli

Not surprised.

That's the reaction of local spiritual leaders on new survey data revealing a simultaneous uptick in the number of LGB individuals who identify as Christian while the number of Americans, in general, who report they are Christian declines.

More LGB Americans consider themselves Christian than ever before, according to the Pew Research Center.

A new survey says 48% of LGB Americans identify as Christian, up from 42 % in 2013. That statistic contrasts the center's finding that overall there has been a decline in those identifying as Christian, from 78.4 % of Americans identifying as Christian, down to 70.6 %, based on a 35,000 person sample.

The decline, Pew says, is taking place across the religious landscape, affecting all regions of the country and many demographic groups. The same trends are seen among whites, blacks and Latinos; among both college graduates and adults with only a high school education; and among women as well as men. But not among the LGB community.

"Among respondents who identify themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual, fully 41% are religiously unaffiliated, and fewer than half (48%) describe themselves as Christians," the study finds, although the fewer than half is higher than the last measure of 42%.

"Non-Christian faiths also are represented in the gay community at higher rates than among the general public, with 11% of gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents identifying with faiths other than Christianity," study notes.

Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu mostly compromised the 11 % of non-Christian faith. Under the 41% of religiously unaffiliated, 8 % identify as atheist, 9 % as agnostic, and the remaining 24 % don't identify with any particular label.

The findings could represent a culture shift, says Matthew Vines, author of God and the Gay Christian. "Many people might find that figure surprising, in large part because the majority of LGBT people represented in the media don't identify as Christians," Vines told the media.

"The 'Christians vs. LGBT people' narrative that we hear so often is part of the story, but as the Pew poll shows, it's not all of it. In fact, it's the 48 % of LGBT Americans who are Christians who are best positioned to change both religious attitudes about same-sex marriage and secular attitudes about religion. As LGBT Christians continue to find their voice, they'll be changing both their churches and the LGBT community for the better."

Rev. Lori Hatch-Rivera

Locally, MCC of the Spirit's Rev. Lori Hatch-Rivera thinks there are a number of ways to look at this data. She is pastor of MCC of the Spirit, Harrisburg.

"As more LGB people come out and as many churches become 'Open and Affirming' of our community, it is safer to 'come out' as LGB and Christian," she says.

Other factors play into the reported numbers too.

"There is a rise in faith voices, LGB and straight, clergy and lay-people, speaking out for the LBGT community here in Pennsylvania," Hatch-Rivera says. She cites the efforts of Equality PA calling upon "the faith community to be voices of justice."

One example Hatch-Rivera cites is that the LGBT Interfaith Coalition meets monthly in Harrisburg and "is a faith voice for social justice specifically for the LGBT community and for all issues that required voices of justice." One of the group's goal is to identify the houses of worship in the greater Harrisburg area that are open and affirming of the LGBT community. The group also participated in the April 28 Marriage Equality Rally on the steps of Harrisburg's

Equality PA's Ammon Ripple, MLS, MDiv, the organization's statewide Faith Organizer, says he is not surprised by this trend.

Ammon Ripple, MLS, MDiv

"When I work with LGBT people of faith people across the state and tell them that more than 650 Pennsylvania clergy from 30+ denominations are supportive of LGBT equality and inclusion, it usually does not take long before some start to wonder if they might go back to church."

Ripple also reports that after marriage equality became law in Pennsylvania, having been overturned by the court rather than an affirmative piece of legislation by the General Assembly, "many same-sex couples were very intentional about turning to a pastor or rabbi to officiate at their weddings rather than a judge. After years of painful alienation, some of these couples were surprised to find a welcoming faith community."

Rev. Dr. Terry Karanen

Like Ripple, Rev. Dr. Terry Drew Karanen, Spirit, Mind and Body Foundation, is also not surpised. He doesn't "find anything earth-shaking" in this data.

"A majority of LGB people identify as Christian, in a country where the major identify as Christian that's not exactly astounding," he says.

The Pew report has a sizable number of participants, he notes, "yet less than five % of the population interviewed identified as LGB. Neither does the report indicate race and cultural backgrounds, nor does it give demographic information as to the participants, like if they are rural or suburban or from the Deep South where just about everyone identifies as Christian," Karanen says.

He trusts studies done by Pew Research Center, "but without additional information I don't see that the results of this particular study tell us a whole lot about the religious affiliations of LGB people in south central Pennsylvania – most of who, I'm guessing, would identify as Christian."

Karanen thinks that the study indicates "many of our Christian denominations and churches are not meeting the needs of their members, in particular the Millennials and the LGB communities. It's changing, but slower than most would like."

He also mentions a recent NPR report indicating "that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. By 2050 the number of Muslims in the U.S. will nearly equal Christians, and by the 22nd century Christians will be a minority in this country."

The Unacceptably High Cost of Religious Freedom Laws

By Bob Witeck

Today 37 states and Washington, D.C., offer marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Is it a coincidence that scores of bills have erupted in state legislatures in the name of "religious liberty," from those who oppose same-sex marriage?

Nope. While same-sex couples and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) families join center stage, rising choruses of "not so fast" are flaring up. Conservative activists and legislators are rushing to build statutory firewalls against LGBT acceptance and cooperation—particularly ones that deal risky and direct blows to American commerce.

After all, religious freedom advocates insist, even if gay couples choose to marry why should we force a business owner or even a solitary employee to serve them if this violates his faith?

For American businesses however, this begs the questions: What price really justifies discrimination? How do we advocate free enterprise by turning away whole classes of customers.

All of these issues have just been put to the shock test, as Indiana Gov. Mike Pence signed his state's law that opens the door for individuals or companies to refuse actions that impose a "substantial burden" on their religious beliefs.

The blowback is fierce, and shows no signs of easing. This is shown by the swift response of business leaders and powerhouses like the NCAA (based in Indianapolis) preparing to host this year's Final Four tournament.

While chambers of commerce and technology companies have been among the most vocal critics, including Apple, Yelp and Salesforce, others are now speaking out. The CEO of Angie's List just declared their Indianapolis expansion canceled, and a host of other U.S. businesses are moving fast to ban future travel and business contacts with Indiana.

To be clear, religious liberty laws can touch both government actions as well as those in the private sector. While both are disturbing, for the moment my concern is with the American marketplace.

Ten years ago, when I wrote about the emerging LGBT economy in my book, "Business Inside Out," I described the signs of businesses past that hung in shops, hotels, restaurants and other public accommodations: "No Jews," "No Negroes," "No Irish," or "No Chinese or dogs."

Not one declared, "No Homosexuals." There was absolutely no need. It was then universally acknowledged that shopkeepers and business owners could ban LGBT customers and guests outright.

Religious objectors in the market are by no means new. In doctrinaire Puritan times, non-believers had little chance to open shop or expect civil treatment. Instead they took their "outsider" faith elsewhere or even formed new colonies. And in the 20th-century Jim Crow America, Biblical dictates guided legislatures and courtrooms to uphold segregation.

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To be fair, in our 21st century, religious freedom legislation is not identical to hated Jim Crow laws. However, these

continued on page 19

When Religious Freedom Applies to a Private Business

By Leon Hendrix

Wedding Bell Blues?

Corporations are people. And some of them go to church.

The owner of a Grandville auto repair shop says he won't hesitate "to refuse service to an openly gay person or persons."

Brian Klawiter, the owner of Dieseltec on Ottawa Avenue in Grandville, MI, posted the statement to his company's Facebook page on Tuesday because he says the voices of those who have Christian, conservative values are often overshadowed by those who do not.

"I want to have a voice about this," Klawiter told 24 Hour News 8 Wednesday. "I want to be heard about this… It's challenging to decide to say I'm on the opposing side of what's seen as the popular view."

The post in question starts with "Enough is enough."

"Apparently if you are white (or close to it), you have a job, go to church, and own a gun…That translates into racist, privileged, bigot… Our rights as conservative Americans are being squashed more and more everyday…" the post reads in part.

The line that's drawing the most conversation is the one that addresses "openly gay" individuals.

"I would not hesitate to refuse service to an openly gay person or persons. Homosexuality is wrong, period," Klawiter wrote. "If you want to argue this fact with me then I will put your vehicle together with all bolts and no nuts and you can see how that works."

The post had gotten a couple dozen comments and about two dozen shares as of Wednesday evening. Many commenters criticized his views, but some were supportive.

While Klawiter acknowledges that the post could be viewed as offensive, he says he doesn't regret writing it.

"I think I exercised a little more freedom than I would on a news broadcast," Klawiter said of his post, adding that he didn't expect the post to get the attention it has. "If you have a vehicle that needs to be repaired, we'd be happy to do that for you. But if you want to come in here with your boyfriend and you want to openly display that, that's just not going to be tolerated here. We don't believe that here."

> "Homosexuality is wrong, period. If you want to argue this fact with me then I will put your vehicle together with all bolts and no nuts and you can see how that works."
>
> *- Facebook posting by auto repair shop owner Brian Klawiter on why he would refuse service to a gay person.*

Klawiter says he isn't asking clientele about their sexuality, but is emphatic that he won't tolerate "outward" affectionate behavior between same-sex couples.

Asked to consider his post from the eyes of a person who is gay, Klawiter responded:

"I think it would be made pretty clear to me that I'm not welcome there, which I would almost consider that enlightening. I would know exactly where not to go."

Discrimination based on sexual orientation has not been outlawed in Michigan, though several municipalities have local ordinances on the matter. Grand Rapids and East Grand Rapids are among the West Michigan cities that have ordinances that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Grandville, however, has no such ordinance.

Grandville Mayor Steve Maas said he's open to discussing one, but that the citizens would have to ask for it.

"There are many people who have deeply held, sincerely held, very conservative religious and political beliefs. But on the other hand, that same group of people is a very kind group of people that does not tolerate bigotry and intolerance, so it would be very interesting to see that debate," Maas said.

Klawiter is among those who doesn't think the city should have a non-discrimination ordinance that includes sexual orientation.

"I've chosen to put God first in my life and that he owns everything in me and my business and beyond," Klawiter said. "Since that becomes a priority, I can't sacrifice on those morals."

Religion News Service Editor Kevin Eckstrom Comes Out

By Eliel Cruz

When Religion News Service Editor-in-chief Kevin Eckstrom announced this month he would leave the wire service for a new post at the Washington National Cathedral, he went public with a lot more than a major career change.

During exit interview with Interfaith Voices, Kevin made an even bigger revelation – He is gay.

For many of us who work with Kevin, this is far from news. Kevin married his husband, Grant, in 2006 and was blessed with the cutest twins in 2012. But very few people in his work world knew this. For all intents and purposes, Kevin was, at least professionally, in the closet.

"I was always very careful about who I friended on Facebook or what I said on Twitter. I always had an eye looking over my shoulder at what the Family Research Council might say or what Focus on the Family might say or some of the publicists we worked with," Kevin told Interfaith Voices.

Kevin made a transition from evangelicalism to Catholicism in 2006 noting that despite the church's anti-LGBT stance, it was the theology that mattered to him.

"The reason why evangelicalism no longer fit for me as I came out of the closet, I felt as if I was sitting in church with a black x on my forehead. Looking around I felt if people really knew who I was they wouldn't want me here."

It was during the height of marriage equality protests in which the Catholic Church spent large amounts of money to "basically make my family illegal" that Kevin and his family felt it was time to leave.

"I didn't feel like I could, in good conscience, stay and put money in the plate and sort of contribute to my own discrimination," he said. Kevin eventually found his home in the Episcopal Church in 2009. He was finally in a faith tradition that allowed him to be out in the pews.

Still, for his work he felt the need to be in the closet. This was not due to any pressures from the RNS staff or board who were very much aware of Kevin's beautiful family. He just didn't want his sexuality to somehow reflect how people viewed the work of RNS as a whole.

"Honestly, that's part of the reason I wanted to find something new. Not that I didn't' want to do it anymore but that it can, frankly, get a little exhausting to constantly worry about what people will say if they really knew." He also feared that people would, incorrectly, accuse RNS of having a so-called "gay agenda."

I relate to Kevin here as a bisexual person of faith who feels called to work in ministry. I've pushed aside any thoughts of going to seminary partly due to the struggles my LGBT seminarian friends have faced. Many of my LGBT friends have trouble finding jobs post-seminary just due to their sexual or gender identities.

If you're an out LGBT person, finding a job in the religion world is next to impossible. Even with religious jobs in which you never really encounter anything LGBT in your day to day tasks, such as daycare workers, it's still hard to land a job.

Sometimes, it's easier to skirt your identity in order to do the work you feel God called you to do.

"There were times where I couldn't be as honest as I wanted to be," Kevin told Interfaith Voices. "I'd like to think that I've never lied or said a mistruth. But I have been forced at times to be less than forthcoming. So I'll talk about my family or my family but maybe not my husband. The most awkward thing that would come up fairly regularly is that I would mention something about the kids and they would ask 'well what does your wife do?' or 'you and your wife must be so busy' and depending who it is, sometimes I would have to let it slide."

Having to remain in the closet to work speaks volumes. It directly reflects how LGBT religious folk are innately seen as less than their straight counterparts. But also, it adds a lot of stress factors. One of the many reasons LGBT youth are encouraged to come out is because it lessens the depression and anxiety they face from being closeted. While Kevin was personally out and not under that level of duress, being professionally closeted did add a layer of stress to his job description.

Being an out LGBT person and being hired by an organization that deals with religion can also mean that you bear an unnecessary burden. Unlike your straight coworkers, your sexual or gender identity can be used to tarnish the reputation of not only yourself but of your employer.

Despite those challenges, Kevin did an incredible job at RNS and the entire team is sad at his departure.

Even more, I'm proud of Kevin for speaking his truth.

It takes a lot of courage to come out publicly knowing that professional relationships will change and some doors may close. But in speaking his truth, readers and friends of RNS will know yet another LGBT person of faith. They will know one more person who has deep spiritual connections, a beautiful family, and who stays in the church not in spite of theology but because of it.

MCC column

By Rev. Lori Hatch-Rivera, Pastor
MCC of the Spirit

Sunshine Within

Happy Summer everyone!

I didn't think spring would get here and now it seems we ran right over spring into summer.

This time of year is always a wonderful time to engage in outdoor activities - boating, fishing, walking, picnics, bike rides or going to the beach.

For me it is a time of year to get rid of the cobwebs that seem to grow in corners of the long winter. I really notice the cobwebs that seem to grow inside me. Mostly I notice the webs that lead to feelings of depression or being "blue". As the sun comes in the webs are revealed. As they are revealed I can work to get rid of them from within me. I sweep them out so the sunshine can fill every corner of my being.

The bright sunshine reveals webs that have collected; those that hide or hinder my self-confidence and self-esteem. The sun begins to burn those away and out of my life. The sunshine reveals webs that are unhealthy thoughts - those that tell me it's ok to overeat and have another dessert or to not take care of myself or provide time for myself or time with my wife. Spring and summer are reminders to get with the program, my programs. To eat healthier and to get some exercise. No more excuses that it is too cold outside. These seasons are reminders to take time for my personal well-being and sweep away the webs.

Most importantly, the sun reminds me of all the blessings in my life. This gets rid of the rest of the webs. Blessings are wonderful things. They moves me from whining to rejoicing. Rejoicing in life, rejoicing in being, and rejoicing in the Lord.

As we move into summer and are engaged in our activities; from going on vacation to attending Pride events, I encourage you too to let the sun shine in your life. Not just on your skin but inside where webs can gather and grow. Let the sunshine of summer help sweep the webs out of your life.

May you see your blessing in the shining of the sun within you!

High Cost *cont'd from page 17*

modern descendants do have the disturbing aroma of stigma and discrimination that masquerades as true faith.

Advocates for religious freedom bills say they don't urge discrimination against individual gay people, but rather are seeking religious exemption from recognizing same-sex couples and their families.

After all, any gay man or lesbian, some argue, can walk into a bakery and buy a cake, or simply pick up flowers at any florist. The shrillest objections are against two gay men or two lesbians spending their money as a couple.

The targets of the current crop of bills are same-sex couples wishing to be respected equally wherever they shop, plan their wedding, choose to live, seek medical care, and decide whether to have and raise their own children.

Experience shows that, given choices, gay consumers and couples will favor friendly retailers and services, while avoiding shops, services and vendors where hostility or rejection lurk. However, the ability to make a free purchasing choice is a far cry from being lawfully and forever blacklisted by a religious business owner or by a devout employee of a larger company.

First, whose religion under law are we safeguarding? Only Christian evangelicals instructed by church elders to shun LGBT families, and no others?

Should dogmatic Christians also shun adulterers as well as nonbelievers like Jews, Muslims and atheists? Should orthodox Jews tell Muslim families to take their trade elsewhere too? Should evangelical Christians deny service to Mormon customers perhaps? These cruel questions are punctuated by the sounds of shop doors slamming.

Second, in our competitive marketplace, can any business really afford to turn away legitimate customers? When gay couples shop for flowers and wedding cakes, they are not asking the business owner to bless their union nor to change their religious convictions at all. They are asking for equal service and courtesy. When one class of customer is turned away—any such company bears the burden of lost profit and lost reputation by many more.

Third, what about the burdens, costs and risks for any employer, when one or a handful of employees are lawfully free to shun a married same-sex couple because of their professed faith? The employer is saddled unfairly with harmful barriers to free commerce that should trouble us all.

There is no question that churches, temples and mosques and the religious leaders who serve them are inviolate from any command to use their services or premises that are outside their faith.

Yet, in the public sphere; faith is neither a tool nor social club designed to create special exemptions, liberties or litigious boundaries when capitalistic acts are intended between consenting adults.

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Groups Participate in Highmark Walk

Forty-seven nonprofit organizations particpated in the recent Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community, an annual fundraising walk that benefits local health and human service agencies.

The primary goal of the walk is to help participating organizations raise money for their individual missions. Highmark Health organizes the entire event infrastructure. Organizations willing to assemble teams and raise funds for their mission face no administrative costs to participate. Events are held in Pittsburgh, Erie, Bethlehem, Harrisburg, and Johnstown.

"We had over 2,000 walkers preregistered with an additional 200+ virtual walkers raising funds this year," said Jodie Ruediger, Highmark Health lead community affairs analyst. "Currently we are 86% of our goal," she said. The website remains open for a few weeks after the event. "We topped $332,000 last year and we're hoping to do at least that again this year," Ruediger said.

At press time, the top 10 fundraising organizations were:

1. Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, 2. Susquehanna Service Dogs. 3. Hope Within Ministries, 4.The Salvation Army Harrisburg Capital City Region, 5. Kidney Foundation of Central Pennsylvania, 6. Chasing Rainbows, 7. The Partnership for Hope. 8. Center for Independent Living of Central PA, 9. Paxton Ministries, 10. Caitlin's Smiles

Also participating in the event were the LGBT Community Center, Harrisburg and Alder Health Services.

Alder Health Services staff, from left: Jen Glass, CEO Rosemary Browne, Mary Bohacek, and Sakkina Alston.

Out Gay U.S. Ambassador Gives Blood In Spain, Which He Cannot Do In U.S.

U.S. Ambassador James Costos

James Costos donates blood in Madrid. The out gay U.S ambassador to Spain may be banned from donating blood at home in the United States but he appeared eager to post a photo of himself donating blood in Spain, where the rules are different. "I joined Team U.S. Embassy Madrid donating blood. Please join us, it feels good to give…trust me!" he wrote in the April post. "Gracias." But back in the the United States, the Food and Drug Administration bans blood donations from men who have had sex with another man anytime since 1977 — a rule approved more than three decades ago during the AIDS epidemic. However, as blood screening and HIV testing have made advances, the policy has been criticized as unscientific and discriminatory by some medical organizations, Congressional Democrats, and advocacy groups. In Spain, however, being gay does not disqualify potential blood donors. The donors are screened based on the individual's risk factors — such as how recently they became intimate with a new partner and other behaviors that could raise chances of exposure to HIV.

To bring attention to the ban locally, an event was held at the LGBT Community Center to bring attention to the blood donation ban. Blood donations were made by MCC of the Spirit pastor, Rev. Lori Rivera, Robert Schaffer and his son Alan Kennedy-Schaffer, and Pat Van Horn, shown here with Stuart Landon. Blood donations were also made by Dorothy Fulton and *Central Voice* columnist Trum Simmons.

Alan Kennedy-Schaffer

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Women's Health Back on Front Burner

Members of the legislature's Women's Health Caucus unveiled on May 11 their "Pennsylvania Agenda for Women's Health" for the new legislative session. The co-chairs of the bipartisan caucus, Reps. Dan Frankel, D-Allegheny, and Frank Farry, R-Bucks; and Sen. Judy Schwank, D-Berks, and Sen. Chuck McIlhinney, R-Bucks, announced their renewed effort.

State Reps. Brian Sims, D-Phila., and Tina Davis, D-Bucks, have also reintroduced equal-pay legislation as part of the package.

The bills in the Pennsylvania Agenda for Women's Health include:

Family-friendly working conditions

* *Workplace accommodations for pregnant women:* H.B. 1176, sponsored by Reps. Sheryl Delozier, R-Cumberland, and Mark Cohen, D-Phila.; and S.B. 40, sponsored by Sen. Matt Smith, D-Allegheny. This legislation would require a covered employer to make reasonable accommodations related to pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions unless those accommodations would prove an undue hardship on the employer's operations.

* *Sanitary conditions for nursing mothers:* H.B. 1100, sponsored by Reps. Mary Jo Daley, D-Montgomery, and David Parker, R-Monroe; S.B. 826, sponsored by Sen. Chuck McIlhinney, R-Bucks. This legislation would require employers to provide a private, sanitary space for employees who need to express breast milk. It would fix two main loopholes in federal law. It would apply to all employees, including those that are exempt from federal overtime provisions. Secondly, it would require employers to provide a private, sanitary space for mothers to express milk beyond one year after birth. The legislation mirrors the federal provision that exempts small employers from these requirements if they would present an undue hardship to the employer.

* *Protecting all employees from sexual harassment:* H.B. 846, sponsored by Rep. Mike Schlossberg, D-Lehigh; and S.B. 506, sponsored by Sen. Jay Costa, D-Allegheny. These similar bills would end the exemption from state sexual harassment law for those who employ three or fewer people.

PENNSYLVANIA CAMPAIGN for WOMEN'S HEALTH

Economic fairness

* Equal pay: H.B. 1160, sponsored by Reps. Tina Davis, D-Bucks, and Brian Sims, D-Phila.; and S.B. 303, sponsored by Sens. Rob Teplitz, D-Dauphin, and Anthony Williams, D-Phila. This legislation would clarify and update the legal standards for pay-equity lawsuits, including by closing the "factor other than sex" defense to apply only to bona fide business-related factors such as education, training or experience.

* *Raising the minimum wage:* H.B. 250, sponsored by Rep. Patty Kim, D-Dauphin; and S.B.s 195 and 196, sponsored by Sen. Christine Tartaglione. These bills would raise the minimum wage in steps to $10.10 per hour and also increase the lower minimum wage for tipped workers to 70 percent of that rate (Senate legislation) or 75 percent (House bill).

* *Retirement security:* H.B.s 1185 and 1186, sponsored by Rep. Steve Santarsiero, D-Bucks. This legislation would require that a public employee obtain spousal consent for any benefit payment structure that does not provide at least a 50 percent survivor benefit to the employee's surviving spouse. The federal government and 27 states have a spousal consent requirement to protect spouses, usually women, from being blindsided after a spouse's death when they discover that they are not entitled to any of their deceased spouse's pension benefit.

* *Exempt more earned income from TANF income limits:* H.B. 1123, sponsored by Rep. Michelle Brownlee, D-Phila.; S.B. 203, sponsored by Schwank. This legislation would raise the exemption from 50 percent to 75 percent to encourage people to work, acknowledging that low-income working families' expenses use up a large percentage of their take-home pay. At the current level, families in Pennsylvania often find themselves in roughly the same spot financially after they start working as they were before they started working, taking into account taxes, transportation, clothing and child care co-payments.

Ensuring healthy lives

* *Patient trust:* H.B. 1105, sponsored by Frankel. This legislation would protect patients and providers from inappropriate, unscientific legislative intrusion into medical decision-making. It would protect the patient-provider relationship from statutory directives to practice care in a manner that is not in accordance with the standard of care.

continued on page 23

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Walkers at AIDSwalk on October 12, 2014 in Tucson, Arizona, USA.

Surviving With Pride

POSITIVE THOUGHT
by Jeff Berry

The summer months are typically jam-packed with parades, events and festivities that bring many of us in the LGBTQ community together to revel in our uniqueness, pay tribute to our leaders and honor achievements in our ongoing fight for equality.

For those like me who are long-term survivors of HIV/AIDS, there is even more to celebrate – the fact that we have survived long enough to be able to continue to achieve our own personal goals, have a career, or even start a family. But surviving HIV/AIDS can often come with its own set of issues, such as isolation, depression, substance abuse, stigma, and early aging and mortality.

Over the last 30-plus years I've lost hundreds of friends, acquaintances and colleagues to HIV and AIDS. In the 25 years since I first tested positive and began treatment, I've developed strange conditions such as thrush, kidney sludge and shingles. I've been poked, prodded and bled, and made out living wills and medical powers of attorney. I've stood in protest lines and marched on Washington, walked marathons and participated in a bike ride. I've fallen in love, and broken hearts.

I've probably been on 10 different drug regimens during that time, which most likely saved my life but definitely have taken their toll. My viral load is undetectable, and my CD4 T-cells and CD4 percentage are near what a normal, healthy HIV-negative person my age might be expected to have. But as the population of people living with HIV and AIDS ages (approximately 50 percent of those living with HIV are now over age 50), we're beginning to understand that there is much more to the story than simply numbers and percentages. Underneath the surface of the syndrome we know as AIDS lies a darker and much more sinister enemy. Those of us who have come through the fight know that enemy intimately, and we have the battle scars to prove it – but we need new tools and weapons to fight it.

I was first diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) shortly after I tested HIV-positive in 1989 and went into psychotherapy. PTSD, as defined by the Mayo Clinic, is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event – either experiencing or witnessing it. Not everyone who experiences the event will develop PTSD. Some may just have difficulty coping for a while, but eventually they'll adjust and get back to their "normal" life. It's only when symptoms (which can manifest as intrusive memories, avoidance, negative changes in thinking or mood, or changes in emotional reactions) start to cause significant problems in social or work situations and relationships, that it becomes a more serious issue.

While my PTSD was related to childhood sexual abuse, it was triggered by living in the midst of a holocaust and ending up testing positive myself. The disorder was no less real to me, however, and I still struggle with the effects to this day.

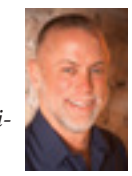
Just as veterans who return from war and who may have difficulty re-assimilating, long-term survivors of HIV/AIDS can often feel out of place and useless. In a perfect world we would pay proper respect to our own soldiers, and let them know we appreciate all that they've been through. Programs and services designed and tailored specific to our own unique needs as AIDS veterans are desperately needed. It's time for us to create the structures and support systems that will help our veterans financially, mentally and physically, well into their golden years. They – we – deserve no less.

In June, *Positively Aware* magazine and its publisher, the Chicago-based HIV service organization TPAN, will launch The Reunion Project (TRP), to help long-term survivors of HIV and AIDS honor our past, examine resilience, and identify and develop successful strategies for living – today and into the future. The Reunion Project will be a series of summits and activities happening across the country, the next one being held in Palm Springs in November.

Those now coming into young adulthood never knew a time when HIV didn't exist, and for their entire life effective treatments for HIV/AIDS have always been available – in other words, for them it's always been a manageable chronic illness, such as diabetes or hypertension. While fear motivated us to fight to survive early on in the epidemic, it's no longer an effective deterrent or motivator for those who aren't experiencing the same sense of loss on a day-to-day basis. The fear of death from HIV/AIDS is now a distant memory, an abstract concept.

They say that with age comes wisdom – I'm not sure if I'm the best example of that, but I do think there's another exciting opportunity for long-term survivors of HIV and AIDS, and that is to engage the next generation to talk about some of the experiences we've been through, challenges we've overcome, and triumphs we've achieved, to try to start to bridge the gap that currently exists between us. And I'm sure we could learn a thing or two from those who are, or will soon be, leaders in their own right.

It's necessary to hear and share our stories with one another, for they define us. It's where we come from; it's who we are. We have the opportunity to learn from our past, and to mentor and guide an entirely new group – while honoring our history, and the fallen.



Jeff Berry is the editor in chief of Positively Aware magazine, and Director of Publications at Test Positive Aware Network in Chicago.

Lancaster Story Circle *continued from page 7*

been employed by Isaac's Restaurant and Deli from 1987 until October 2008. His last position was Vice President of Operations, a position he held since May 1989.

Leas conceptualized and organized the first DINE OUT fundraising event in 1992 and had been involved with the organizing committee for 14 years. This event started in Lancaster and recruited area restaurants to donate a portion of an evening's receipts to help fight HIV/AIDS in the community. The event later consolidated with the Harrisburg "Caring a la carte" and the York "Dine-Out." It grew to include the Harrisburg and York areas and had raised more than $400,000 for benefiting AIDS service providers under his leadership.

He had served on the Board of Directors for AIDS Community Alliance for six years and has been a relentless advocate for those affected by HIV/AIDS. David was co-chair and then chair of the AIDS FUND of South Central Pennsylvania. Leas served as Vice-President and President of the Board of Directors of the Lancaster County chapter of the Pennsylvania Restaurant Association. He previously served on the Board of Directors for the PA Restaurant Association and served as chair of the Membership Committee. He resides in Elizabethtown, PA with his spouse Ben Dunlap.

Joseph Burns

Joseph Burns, who was active between the years 1967 and 1983, was an original member of Le Hi Ho, The Lehigh Valley Homophile Organization, for 16 years.

Burns was active (1974-78) with GCS, Gay Coordinating Society of Reading, as well as an original member (1975-83) of the Rural Gay Caucus, elected co-chair in the caucus's first year with Mary Nancarrow. He was an active member of Allentown NOW (1976-80) and founder (1977-80) Allentown's CCBC, Citizens Concerned for a Better Community, a gay advocacy organization formed to support human rights for gays.

Burns was also (1980-82) founder and active member of Gayline, Allentown. In 2013, he donated to the history Project newsletters, organization files, newspapers, magazines and memorabilia representing gay activism in the early days of Pennsylvania's movement. The collection, along with numerous other donations, is available in the Special Collections Section, Dickinson College Library, Carlisle.

Anthony Lascoskie, Jr.

Anthony Lascoskie, Jr. came to Lancaster to attend Millersville University in 1986. By 1991, he met members of the Pink Triangle Coalition, becoming an active member and holding executive board positions throughout his tenure. In 1994, he became coordinator of the LGBT Alliance at Franklin and Marshall College where he still works with the group today. Lascoskie joined in organizing the first Lancaster Gay Pride and served on the organization's board for three years.

Dr. Rachel Levine, PA Physician General

"All bases are covered," Dr. Rachel Levine said when asked about Pennsylvania's ambitious plan to deal with its biggest public health challenge - opioid addiction.

A member of the transgender community, Levine was confirmed June 9 by the state Senate as Pennsylvania's Physician General.

"What should matter is whether the person will do a good job, and Dr. Levine will."

- Democratic Caucus Chairman Dan Frankel

"History-making" is how House Democratic Caucus Chairman Dan Frankel, D-Allegheny, described her appointment. Frankel is also co-chair of the legislature's LGBT Equality Caucus.

"By confirming Dr. Levine, the Senate has not only provided Pennsylvanians with a quality physician general – a majority of our state Senate has affirmed that being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender should not matter in employment. What should matter is whether the person will do a good job, and Dr. Levine will," Frankel said.

With precision, Levine outlines the state's interdepartmental approach to the addictive use of heroin and prescription pain killers. "Seven Pennsylvanians a day die from an overdose," she explains, making the phenomena the state's most pressing problem.

Generally, what are the duties of the state's Physician General?

My role as Physician General is to advise the Secretary of Health, Karen Murphy, and Governor Wolf on medical issues and public health issues. I am a member of the Governor's Cabinet and participate in all Cabinet activities.

What do you bring to the job that is unique?

I believe that my experiences in academic medicine are unique. I am a Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry and have experience in clinical care, medical education, research and administration. In addition, I bring many years of experience as an adolescent medicine specialist and eating disorder specialist. My particular interest has always been where medical issues intersect with mental and behavioral health issues and I can bring that expertise to this position

In advising Gov. Wolf and the Department of Health on medical and public health-related issues, what do you think are important issues?

The single biggest public health issue currently facing the commonwealth is opioid addiction and resulting overdoses. This includes prescription drug abuse and heroin abuse and the resulting deaths that they cause. The Wolf administration is working in a coordinated and interdepartmental way to approach this issue.

Specifically, what is planned?

We now have prescribing guidelines and treatment options for use of pain medications. The guidelines advise doctors, physician assistants, dentists, emergency room professionals, anyone involved in direct patient care. These guidelines will soon be part of continuing education classes when health care professionals attend classes needed for license renewal. We want patients to have pain control but with an understanding of how use pain medications in order to avoid addiction. Each medical discipline will have its own pain control guidelines. For example, an obstetrician would follow different rules than a dentist or a doctor treating cancer or non-cancer pain.

There is now prescription monitoring?

Yes, the program allows health care professionals writing a pain medication prescription to check online, in real time, all the prescriptions a patient has previously received or is receiving from another professional.

This guards against "doctor shopping" for pain medications?

It does. It also alerts the health care professional to offer help, to make a referral for drug and or alcohol treatment and support.

Police and families also now have a new way to prevent overdoes?

They do. The ABC-MAP program is in development and should available in early 2016. That places into the hands of police a nasal spray device that can prevent an overdose. Families can use a device that is an "auto-injector". Both methods use Naloxone, also known as Narcan, which can stop an overdose in progress.

Then a referral for help can be made?

Yes. We'll have $5 million devoted to state of the art addiction treatment. Besides controlling the overuse of pain medications, and hopefully stopping overdoses, we must also offer effective treatment. That's our goal. That may mean more than 30 days.

Are there other health challenges faced by state residents?

Other important public health issues include immunizations, Lyme Disease, Hepatitis C and HIV prevention and treatment.

What is your view of health promotion and disease prevention?

Health promotion and disease prevention are critical aspects of public health and very important initiatives for the PA Department of Health. It is much better to promote health and prevent diseases then react to illness that are already occurring. Important issues in this field include immunizations, nutrition including preventing obesity as well as eating disorders, smoking prevention, adolescent pregnancy prevention and STD prevention.

You are a respected member of the Transgender community and, by extension, the larger LGBT community. Is there a quantifiable, measureable relationship between acceptance of one's personhood and health outcomes?

Thank you very much Yes, I do believe that there is a relationship between acceptance of one's self and positive health outcomes. In addition, there is a significant relationship between acceptance by one's family, friends and the community and health outcomes as well.

Dr. Levine

Levine's enthusiasm for the challenge before her and other departments of state and cabinet members flows through the telephone as she speaks.

Prior to her appointment, Levine was professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at the Penn State College of Medicine, Hershey. She is a graduate of Harvard and the Tulane University School of Medicine and has served as Vice Chair for Clinical Affairs for the Department of Pediatrics and as Chief of the Division of Adolescent Medicine and Eating Disorders at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital-Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

Levine is the Liaison for the LGBT community for the Office of Diversity at the Penn State College of Medicine. In that role, she has established a LGBT faculty and staff affinity group and is the facilitator for the LGBT student group.

Women's Health

cont'd from page 21

** Creating a task force on women veterans' health care:* H.R. 234, sponsored by Farry and Rep. Pamela DeLissio, D-Phila./Montgomery. The task force would submit a report by April 2016 on health care issues unique to women veterans, along with the quality of and access to care for women veterans.

** Ensuring access to health care facilities:* S.B. 809, sponsored by Sen. Larry Farnese, D-Phila.; and H.B. 1158, sponsored by Rep. Matt Bradford, D-Montgomery. This legislation would create 15-foot buffer zones around health care facilities where picketing, patrolling or demonstrating that blocks patients' access to the facilities would be banned. Some cities such as Pittsburgh and some states such as Colorado and Massachusetts have passed such laws already.

Protecting victims of domestic violence

** Cell phone contract termination for domestic violence victims:* H.B. 1108, sponsored by Rep. Kevin Schreiber, D-York. This legislation would exempt domestic violence victims from fees when removing themselves from an abuser's cell phone contract or having the abuser removed.

It also would require cell phone companies to provide new phone numbers to domestic violence victims with appropriate documentation.

** Early lease termination for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking:* H.B. 1051, sponsored by Rep. Madeleine Dean, D-Montgomery. This legislation would allow for early termination of a rental lease with 30 days' notice if the tenant is the victim of domestic violence, sexual assault and/or stalking, and to have their locks changed within three days at the tenant's expense.

** Safe Campuses legislation:* S.B. 202, sponsored by Schwank; H.B. 1173, sponsored by Reps. Tina Davis, D-Bucks, and Maria Donatucci, D-Phila./Delaware. This legislation would require all colleges and universities to adopt policies and programs to make students, staff and officials aware of the risks of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. It would also require colleges and universities to submit annual reports on occurrences of sexual assault and intimate partner violence on campus.

The Pennsylvania Women's Health Caucus is a bipartisan, bicameral caucus of legislators partnering with interest groups and advocacy organizations seeking to develop and implement legislation and social policy that protects and respects a woman's right to make private, personal medical decisions.

Careful What You Ask For

Will LGBT couples be *required* to marry?

Could there be an unintended consequence in the victory? Could employers require same-sex couples to marry in order to receive shared benefits? Some are worried that could be the case. Others point out the difference between marriage and domestic partnership benefits.

Unmarried Equality headed up the signing of a statement printed below.

JOINT STATEMENT IN FAVOR OF MAINTAINING DOMESTIC PARTNER BENEFITS - *June 2004*

We, the undersigned, are organizations and individuals working for equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and their loved ones. We share a concern that some Massachusetts employers are considering eliminating their domestic partner health benefits plans now that same-sex couples may marry in that state. We urge employers to maintain their domestic partner benefits policies even after civil marriage is available to same-sex couples.

Domestic partnership is not a substitute for marriage. Likewise, marriage is not a substitute for domestic partnership. The two options serve different purposes for different people in different situations. We believe there are important reasons why domestic partner benefits policies should be maintained after same-sex couples have the right to marry. These include:

1) Domestic partner benefits were originally developed to recognize family diversity in the workplace, not as a temporary solution until same-sex couples have the option of marriage.

The first workplace to write a domestic partner benefits policy was The Village Voice newspaper, which made "marital" employment benefits available first to unmarried heterosexual employees in long-term relationships, and later expanded their policy to include gay and lesbian domestic partners.(1) Some employers argue that domestic partner benefits are no longer necessary once all employees are free to get married. In fact, though, these benefits were originally intended as a way to provide fair and equal treatment to the growing diversity of employees' families, both married and unmarried, and to reduce marital status discrimination.

2) Most employers' domestic partner benefits plans do not have a provision that says, "If you can marry, you must marry."

92% of employers who offer domestic partner benefits make them available to both same-sex and different-sex couples.(2) These employers have no reason to consider eliminating their policies, since they do not rely on marriage as the sole way to define employees' families (that is, they allow heterosexual employees to receive benefits for an nonmarital partner). Recent interviews suggest these employers with inclusive policies are far less likely to plan to withdraw their policies as same-sex couples gain the opportunity to marry. We strongly recommend that employers who are among the small minority offering domestic partner benefits only to same-sex partners consider expanding their policies to be inclusive, the approach which is becoming standard business practice, rather than eliminating domestic partner benefits entirely.

3) The cost to offer the benefits is low, and they bring potential savings in recruiting and retaining employees.

Numerous studies of domestic partner benefits plans have found that on average, these benefits increase health care costs only 0.5% to 3%. Researchers' conclusions tend to use phrases like "not a costly proposition for employers," and "companies consistently reported the financial impact of DP benefits as "negligible" or "minimal."(3) These costs are likely to decrease as many same-sex couples get married, leaving fewer domestic partners in need of benefits. Many employers find domestic partner benefits are a small price to pay for the competitive advantage they receive in employee recruitment and retention. One survey of 279 human resources professionals representing nineteen industries found that domestic partnership benefits were among the top three most effective incentives for recruiting new hires.(4)

4) Employers should provide equal pay for equal work.

Benefits make up a significant part of employee compensation. If two employees do the same job equally well, they should not receive benefits or be ineligible for benefits based on their marital status. There is no logical reason why civil marriage should be the dividing line between which employees' families are eligible for benefits, and which employees' families are not. If an employer recognizes the value of supporting employees' families, demonstrations of caregiving and emotional and financial interdependence (as outlined in the affidavits of domestic partnership used by many employers) are a more accurate way to define who is "family" than marriage licenses.

5) Some employees with a same-sex partner will live in states where their marriage will not be respected, or where their marital status will be uncertain.

Currently, Massachusetts will only grant marriage licenses to couples who reside in the state or intend to. Even if this policy is changed, there remain many legal questions about whether a same-sex couple's marriage created in another state will be recognized in the couple's own state. Employers who eliminate their domestic partner policies risk cutting off partners and children who are still dependent on the benefits, but who have sound legal reasons for deferring or deciding against marriage. Administering different benefits policies depending on what state employees live in is likely to be unnecessarily expensive and time-consuming for the employer.

6) Marriage equality for same-sex couples is not yet guaranteed for the long-term.

We hope the day will not be far off when same-sex couples enjoy equal marriage rights in every state in the country. However, there are many groups working to reinstate marriage discrimination in Massachusetts and to challenge any other state or city government that respects the marriages of same-sex couples. There is a proposed amendment to the federal Constitution pending in Congress which would make it impossible for any state to perform or recognize the marriages of same-sex couples. Employers who eliminate their domestic partner policies now could regret this decision if they later have to re-establish them if the freedom to marry is denied to same-sex couples as a matter of federal law in the future.

Our community appreciates those employers who have policies that treat LGBT employees fairly and equally. We understand employers' desires to keep their policies up to date as state and national laws change regarding marriage and LGBT people. We hope employers will consider carefully the factors we discuss above when considering the future of their domestic partner benefits policies, and will understand that marriage and domestic partnership can and will continue to exist side by side, two parts of the landscape of family in America.

Signatories to Date

Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere
Family Pride Coalition
Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD)
Human Rights Campaign
Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies
Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
Pride @t Work, AFL-CIO
Unmarried Equality

Signatory organizations are able and willing to assist and consult with employers regarding their domestic partner benefits plans.

All Lives Matter

May 2 about 50 people marched from the steps of the State Capitol through midtown Harrisburg. They were supporting the actions of those in Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray two weeks earlier. His death, while in police custody, sparked riots and activism across the country. The rally was organized by the Harrisburg community action group This Stops Today Harrisburg. "We're here standing with Baltimore showing them that they're not the only ones going through the struggle," rally organizer Bleu Zerbe said. "We're standing up for ourselves in Harrisburg in support of them."

Pennsylvania Youth Congress Takes Form

Formerly known as the Pennsylvania Student Equality Coalition, the organization is now known as the Pennsylvania Youth Congress, according to Jason Landau Goodman, executive director. The first organization formed four years ago and primarily involved high school and college students. The new mission will include all youth between the ages of XX and XX, Goodman said.

PYC will maintain its established offices in Harrisburg, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh.

"Our new name better reflects our mission of empowering young LGBTQ Pennsylvanians with a strong voice in government and community leadership," Goodman said. "We hope to make participation welcoming and accessible to non-student youth, as well as clearly establish our expertise on LGBTQ youth policy work."

Previously, the organization worked on securing safer school policies for Pennsylvania students, work that will continue, but PYC will also "shift more of our resources toward advocating for policies which will have a large-scale impact in improving the lives of Pennsylvania LGBTQ youth," Goodman said.

PYC will be readily available to government officials and community stakeholders "in identifying key policy solutions regarding LGBTQ youth in school, foster care, poverty, and juvenile justice systems," Goodman explains. This will lead to "more direct access to advancing LGBTQ rights locally and within our state government," Goodman said.

LGBT community center coalition

By Louie Marven
Executive Director

Questions from the Road

One part of the work of the LGBT Center that I especially love is the opportunity to provide education on LGBT topics throughout the south-central Pennsylvania region. This work takes me to schools, colleges, social services agencies, government, and business settings, and I get to meet people who come from all kinds of places on LGBT topics.

Sometimes when I talk about this work, I realize that people expect that my experience is a lot more dangerous than it really is; some people perceive that doing this kind of "diversity training" – or cultural competency training – is about confronting people who are overtly homophobic, bi-phobic, and trans-phobic. That isn't the bulk of my experience.

My experience is that there are lots of people who have some level of sensitivity toward LGBT communities and simply need someone to give them a basic framework. They want someone who is a perceived authority on LGBT topics to say, "yes, you can say that word" and "no, you may not say that word" and "here is some language you should consider using when encountering that scenario."

They need someone to be comfortable talking about LGBT topics and to give clear explanations for their questions while honoring that we are living in a time of rapid language evolution and walking the uneven road toward LGBT progress. These are some of the questions I hear a lot, with some commentary on how I answer them.

"What's the Q? Is it really okay to say that word?"

I tell people that queer is a reclaimed word that lots of LGBT people proudly use to describe ourselves, but that not everyone likes it. I say that I like to describe myself as a queer person and part of a queer community, and that it's good to be comfortable hearing people describe themselves that way and know that it's not negative. It's not good to assign that word to a person or a community. I acknowledge that the word is more fashionable in younger, urban, and coastal LGBT communities.

"What bathrooms do transgender people use?"

I waver on how much to emphasize this in LGBT 101-level trainings: it's an important topic, but I don't want to reduce trans experiences to the bathroom paranoia of non-trans individuals. Ultimately, the simple message is that people should use the bathroom that aligns with their gender identity. Someone who is not especially educated on transgender topics needs to hear that a transwoman is a woman, and a transman is a man.

I also like to emphasize that having a gender neutral bathroom option can be helpful in ensuring that trans and gender non-conforming individuals. To demystify the concept of gender neutral bathrooms, I encourage everyone to remember that we all use gender neutral bathrooms every day in our own homes. An important message on the topic of safety in gender-segregated spaces is that while there are zero cases of transgender people attacking non-transgender people in bathrooms, it is in fact transgender people who experience violence in gender-segregated spaces at extremely alarming rates.

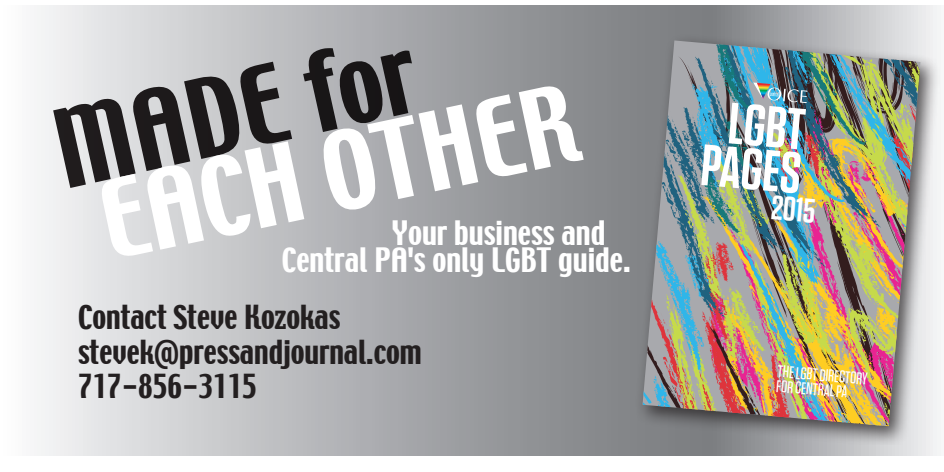
"What if it's a phase {or trend, or experiment)?"

This is an easy one: Who cares?

On a more serious note, I like to use a quote from Maya Angelou: "When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time." Believing someone when they tell you about their identity not only makes the world a better place for the person disclosing their identity, but it can be a relieving thing to the person who is concerned that it's a phase, trend, or experiment. Isn't it great to not have to feel anxious about figuring out if someone's identity will be the same the next time you see them? If someone uses different language to describe one's identity in the future, that's okay. LGBT identities are not historically new, but the language we use to describe genders and sexualities will always evolve with culture. That's something to celebrate, not be afraid of.

Are these the kinds of questions you hear about our LGBT communities when you're out and about in central Pennsylvania? How do you answer them?

The mission of the LGBT Center of Central PA is to create common ground for the LGBT community and allies in central Pennsylvania by providing services through educational, cultural, and community activities that foster wholeness.



HEALTH & WELLNESS

Lack of Judgment

Have you ever been accused of lacking judgment? Almost every teenage girl or boy has been accused of that by a parent at one time or another. Are you slightly smiling, remembering what caused you to be on the receiving end of that accusation?

Possessing "lack of judgment" usually makes me think of a negative situation, particularly if it has to do with my own decisions. I start beating myself up for not having known better. I wonder to whom, or to how many, I'm going to have to make amends.

I recently came across an article about Dolly Parton. It talked about Dolly's lack of judgment. The subject certainly piqued my interest. What could this gay icon have done to reap such criticism? Had her strictly-guarded private life become fodder for some gossip rag?

To my surprise it wasn't about yet another star's indiscretions and it wasn't criticism. Instead, it was a complimentary piece, not on her lack of common sense in the way she lives, but her lack of judgment – meaning she doesn't judge. How refreshing!

Dolly has long been a poster child for GLBTQ rights. She's been quoted as saying that if she were reincarnated as a gay man she'd definitely be a drag queen. You can't get much more accepting as that – imitation is said to be the highest form of flattery! But how does a woman who believes in Jesus move from the fundamentalism of the Christian south into such acceptance of others?

In a complete turnaround in what some GLBTQ people may think about Christianity, Dolly says it's her Christian beliefs that actually allow her to be so accepting! That's one of those, "Huh?!?" statements.

In an article by Steven Payne last year, Dolly explains herself by saying, [i]n the country field, we're brought up in spiritual homes, we're taught to "judge not lest you be judged," and it's always been a mystery to me how people jump all over things just to criticize, condemn and judge other people when that is so un-Christian – and they claim to be good Christians! ... We're supposed to accept and love one another. Whether we do or not, that's a different story. But that's what we're supposed to do.

making sense of life

By Dr. Terry Drew Karanen

If you've ever read my writing before you know I am NOT about playing the victim or blaming others for our situation. In this case, we might use her example to better our own lives. Where can we show more "lack of judgment" in our own lives?

We can start by treating each other with a lot more love and respect. One of the absolute worst examples of just how vicious we can be to each other in our own community happened in the late 1980s at the Christopher Street West Pride Parade in West Hollywood, CA. During a live telecast the gay male commentator remarked, with some smugness, that the parade would be a lot better off without "a bunch of leather queens," to which his lesbian colleague retorted, "Yeah, and the Dykes on Bikes, too."

Are you seething? I was. I was livid. Yet how many times have you heard unkind slurs being bantered back and forth about various segments of our diverse community? Have you yourself ever done this? I have. Not proud of it, but I'm confident enough in my life to admit my mistakes. I remember the woman who told me lesbians don't like to be called "girls" had no problem turning around and referring to us guys as "boys" instead of men. I once saw two-thirds of the men in a gay men's chorus walk out in a huff when a well-qualified lesbian took over the reins. It happened – I was there – both times. You've probably got your own stories. Stuff like this still happens, but we have to be the ones to put a stop to it.

This time of the year is about gay pride, about being out and proud gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender, queer, questioning, LMNOPQRSTUV and a friggin' partridge in a pear tree. Yes, we have a whole lot more work to do to maintain our recently won rights and open even more doors for our community. But before we can open those doors with a clear conscious, let's make sure our own house is in order.

REFUSE to use what you know are derogatory terms for one another. Speak up if your friends and people in the public eye are discriminating against and bullying their own community through slurs, when out of the other side of their mouths they're mounting the troops to wage social warfare on the straight community.

We've only got one planet. Either we all get along or humans will eventually die out as an endangered species by its own decisions. Let's make the 23rd Annual Pride Festival of Central Pennsylvania the best ever! How? By treating each other the same way we expect the greater community to treat us. Be out. Be proud. But above all, be kind to one another.

Terry is a speaker, licensed social worker, author and flight attendant. Read his weekly blog at Central Voice online or on his website at: blog.terrydrewkaranen.com. He is also the director of Spirit, Mind and Body Foundation (spiritmindbodyfoundation.org).

Local Advocates Rally for Marriage

With shouts of "Civil rights are human rights" prompting commuters to beep car horns, about 35 people gathered April 28 at Harrisburg's Ronald Reagan Federal Courthouse. It was the first day the US Supreme Court heard arguments for and against same-sex marriage. The rally was organized by the Capital Region Stonewall Democrats. Featured here, left, is Harry Young, president, Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, addressing the media. One placard holder, right, smiles her approval of the event's message. Other speakers included Christopher Dietz, Millersburg Borough Council President; Rhonda Bailey, Equality PA; Kyle Joines, Legislative Assistant, Representative Kevin Schreiber (95th District); Rev. Lori E. Hatch-Rivera, MCC of the Spirit pastor; Marlene Kanuck; and Caiden Frantangelo.

Photos by *Central Voice*

Chamber on the move

By Bill Krenz

ntral Pennsylvania
Gay and Lesbian
nber of Commerce

Certification Brings Success

As an affiliate of the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, a key component of the mission of the Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce is LGBT Business Enterprise Certification. The certification promotes diversity in corporate supply chains and opens doors economically for certified businesses. There are an estimated 1.5 million LGBT owned and operated businesses in America, yet only a few hundred are certified.

The chamber is committed to increasing this number, starting here in the region, where 10 businesses and counting have become certified through membership in our chamber, and have begun to capitalize on this untapped economic potential.

These certified businesses are pioneers, and they understand that there is no golden ticket when it comes to success. They became certified to unlock corporate supply chain dollars, but also to help continue to build momentum for LGBT equality.

Conservative estimates suggest that there are about 9 million individuals in the United States who identify as LGBT. These individuals live in every state in the nation, and in 99% of the counties in the US. Collectively, LGBT buying power is estimated to exceed $830 billion - a staggering number, and one that is impacted profoundly by the LGBT community here in our region.

Certification is an important element in creating true business equality. While our economic impact is profound, representation of LGBT owned and operated companies in corporate supply chains is disproportionately low. It has been proven time and again that business is a catalyst for broader change. Each newly certified business is one more voice added to this growing movement that will help to bring equality for the LGBT Community.

Upcoming events

A mixer will be held July 8, 6 p.m. at Hospice of Central Pennsylvania, 1320 Linglestown Rd. Harrisburg, hosted by chamber board member Gil Brown.

The chamber will participate in Pride Festival of Central Pennsylvania July 25, Riverfront Park, Harrisburg, and York's Equality Fest Aug. York in downtown York.

Our August mixer is at the familiar LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania at 1306 North Third Street in Harrisburg, and will be held on August 11.

Info: www.cpglcc.org

classifieds

HEALTH/BEAUTY/MISC:

IF YOU USED THE BLOOD THINNER XARELTO AND SUFFERED INTERNAL BLEEDING, HEMORRHAGING, REQUIRED HOSPITALIZATION OR A LOVED ONE DIED WHILE TAKING XARELTO BETWEEN 2011 AND THE PRESENT TIME, YOU MAY BE ENTITLED TO COMPENSATION. CALL ATTORNEY CHARLES H. JOHNSON 1-800-535-5727

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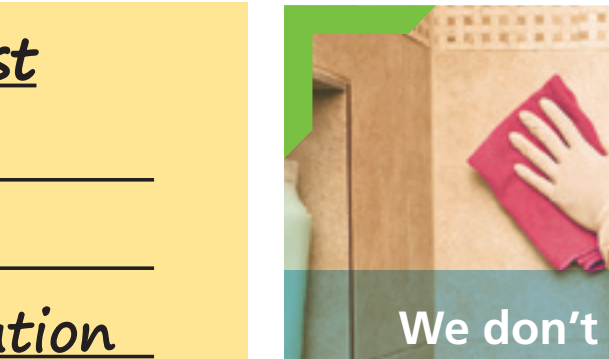

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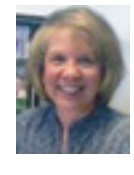

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